Ethical Issues in Supervision

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Four areas where clinicians experience ethical challenges

Confidentiality
- clients with a tendency to hurt themselves
- clients who exhibit dangerous behaviors
- clients with emotional or health-related problems
- minors in insecure situations
- clients involved in illegal acts
- counselors in need of discipline
- counselor behavior that required a board report
- counselors under pressure from administration
- client cases of concerning guardianship
- multi-client cases (family couple)

Multiple relationships
- multi-client cases (family couple)
- gifts
- requests to divert to counseling
- requests by friends to provide counseling
- small rural communities where everyone knows each other
- lack of awareness of need for managing boundaries
Four areas where clinicians experience ethical challenges

**Competence**
- working outside area of expertise
- not understanding legal parameters of certain work areas
- Supervisees who bring questions outside area of expertise
- obligation to help supervisee be "well rounded"

**Values**
- when they are in common with societal norm - we are not aware of imposition
- when they are in opposition to social norm - we wonder what is right/wrong/ or we grapple with frustration
- modern values and traditional families???
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the most critical ethical issues in supervision?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. What are the most important ethical responsibilities supervisors have toward supervisees and supervisee’s clients?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. What kinds of training, coursework, and other professional experiences are essential for competent supervision?</td>
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<td>4. If you were a supervisee, how would you ideally like your supervisor to address multiple roles and relationships that might be a part of the supervisory process?</td>
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<td>5. As a supervisee, how have your relationships with supervisors changed over time? What lessons can you apply from these experiences when you assume a supervisory role?</td>
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<td>6. What kinds of activities that extend beyond the formal supervisory relationship do you think might be appropriate for a supervisor to engage in with a supervisee?</td>
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What are the most critical ethical issues in supervision?

Balance
- The rights of clients
- The rights & responsibilities of supervisees
- The responsibilities of supervisors to supervisees and supervisee’s clients

Competence
- Competence of supervisor
- Competence of supervisee

Multiple Roles and Relationships
- Role conflicts
- Avoiding Dual relationships
What are the most important ethical responsibilities supervisors have toward supervisees and supervisee’s clients?

Before supervising, obtain training & education to ensure competence

Limit one’s clinical practice & supervision to one’s area of competence

Assess supervisee’s competence and training needs at beginning of relationship

Promote ethical practice of supervisee by drawing attention to ethical issues. Model ethical practice & decision making

Treat supervisee with respect and provide timely and meaningful feedback

What are the most important ethical responsibilities supervisors have toward supervisees and supervisee’s clients?
MODELING ETHICAL PRACTICE
MODELING ETHICAL PRACTICE

Confidentiality

- Model professional behavior by dealing appropriately with confidentiality issues with supervisees.
- Supervisors have responsibility of keeping information obtained in supervisory relationship confidential.
- Explain the limitations and parameters of confidentiality.
  - Explain what will be shared with supervisors, faculty, for evaluation
  - Do not share personal information shared in supervisory sessions
  - Maintain confidentiality of supervisee’s clients
ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

- Supervisors have a responsibility to teach supervisees how to think about ethical dilemmas.
- Familiarize supervisee’s with code of ethics
- Teach ethical decision making model
ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

1. Identify the Problem
2. Identify Potential Issues Involved
3. Review Relevant Ethics Codes
4. Know Applicable Laws & Regulations
5. Obtain Consultation
6. Consider Possible and Probable Courses of Action
7. Enumerate the Consequences of Various Decisions
8. Decide the Best Course of Action
ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

RESOURCES FOR CODE OF ETHICS

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences
http://www.acjs.org/pubs/167_671_2922.cfm
ETHICAL DECISION MAKING
FULL HOUSE STYLE

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxRpGMeJPs8
What kinds of training, coursework, and other professional experiences are essential for competent supervision?

Competent Supervisors…
1. Are trained in supervision and periodically update their knowledge and skills on supervision topics through workshops, continuing education conferences, and reading.
2. Must have the education, training, and experience necessary to be competent in the areas of clinical expertise in which they are providing supervision
3. Must have effective interpersonal skills and be able to work with a variety of group and individuals in supervision
4. Must be cognizant of the fact that supervision is a situational process that is dependent on interaction between supervisor, supervisee, the setting and the clients
5. Must be flexible and able to assume a variety of roles and responsibilities
What kinds of training, coursework, and other professional experiences are essential for competent supervision?

Competent Supervisors…

6. Must have a broad knowledge of laws, ethics, and professional regulations that may apply in a variety of situations that could arise in supervision

7. Stay focused on the fact that a primary goal of supervision to monitor clinical services so that the welfare of the client is protected

8. Are willing to serve an evaluative function with supervisees and provide feedback about their performance on a regular basis

9. Document supervision activities in a timely and accurate fashion

10. Empower supervisees. Supervisors assist supervisees at both problem solving current situations and developing a problem solving approach that they can apply to nearly any clinical situation long after the supervision has ended.
Incompetent or Impaired Supervisors

- Engage in exploitive or harmful dual relationships with supervisees
- Sexual contact with supervisees
- Misuse of power
- Extreme burnout
- Makes poor decisions due to inexperience
- Creates a negative experience for supervisee
Incompetent and Impaired Supervisees

- Skill deficits
- Gaps in knowledge
- Subject clients to personal bias & stereotypes
- Personality issues
- Substance Abuse
- Mental illness/Personality Disorders
- Interpersonal sensitivity
- Need for control
- Personal Problems affecting work
- Using one’s position to meet personal needs at the client’s expense.
SUPERVISORS have a responsibility to recognize, monitor, and take action with incompetent or impaired supervisees. Dufrene & Henderson (2009) designed a framework for remediation with counseling trainees. This table describes areas in which to monitor supervisee’s competence.

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<tr>
<th>Professionalism</th>
<th>Counseling Skills</th>
<th>Documentation</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Interpersonal Demeanor</strong></td>
<td>1. Demonstrates basic counseling skills.</td>
<td>1. Completes and submits application for clinical work.</td>
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<td>2. Consults with other professionals and coordinates services related to clients.</td>
<td>2. Completes and submits logs on time.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Demonstrates advanced counseling skills.</td>
<td>3. Completes and submits evaluations on time.</td>
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<td>1. Receptive to feedback from supervisor.</td>
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<td>2. Open to self examination.</td>
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<td>3. Exhibits appropriate boundaries with clients, peers, colleagues, supervisors, and faculty.</td>
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<td><strong>Procedural Compliance</strong></td>
<td>4. Demonstrates his or her theoretical orientation.</td>
<td>4. Completes and submits audio/video tapes of counseling sessions.</td>
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<td>5. Able to conceptualize client cases.</td>
<td>5. Takes notes during supervision.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Attends supervision on time weekly.</td>
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<td>3. Participates in required staffing and meetings.</td>
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<td><strong>Professional Identity</strong></td>
<td>4. Completes and submits audio/video tapes of counseling sessions.</td>
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<td>1. Identifies appropriate counselor roles in specialty area.</td>
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<td>2. Demonstrates ethical behavior.</td>
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Taking Action with Incompetent Supervisees

As gatekeepers, it is of the utmost importance for supervisees to hear from their supervisor about problems before it is too late for them to take corrective measures.

Supervisors have an obligation to provide their supervisees with regular, specific, and ongoing feedback.

Examples of corrective measures could include:
- Increased supervision
- Leave of absence
- Personal therapy
- Taking additional courses or workshops
- Repeating practicum or internship experiences
Multiple Roles and Relationships in the Supervisory Process

• A *multiple relationship* occurs when a supervisor is simultaneously in a professional role and at least one more role (professional or nonprofessional) with the supervisee.

  • Supervision becomes more complicated when supervisors take on two or more roles.

  • If a multiple relationship is neutral or beneficial, supervisors should explore with the supervisee the pros and cons of the relationship.

• *Ethically*, supervisors need to clarify their roles and be aware of potential problems that can develop when boundaries become blurred.

  • This will also help the supervisee practice and develop appropriate boundaries.
Managing Multiple Roles and Relationships

- Multiple roles and relationships cannot always be avoided. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to manage them in ethical and appropriate ways.
  - The bottom line is to avoid multiple relationships that could impair the supervisor’s objectivity, competence, effectiveness or will harm the supervisee.
  - Avoid multiple role relationships that involve an abuse of power.
- A *boundary crossing* is a departure from standard practice that could potentially benefit the client or supervisee. A *boundary violation* is a serious breach that causes harm to the client or supervisee.
  - It is during the practicum and internship experience that many students will actually get to grapple with boundary issues for the first time.
- Some writers have said that avoiding certain multiple relationships could be harmful to some clients and that therapists need to use their professional judgment.
Special Situations

• MENTORING
  • If a supervisory relationship also takes on a mentor-mentee relationship, the critical point is that the person with the greater power initiates a discussion about this type of collaborative project.
  • To be a true mentor and allow a supervisee to know you outside of your authority role may leave you feeling vulnerable.
Special Situations

• DOCTORAL AND MASTER’S STUDENTS
  • In counselor education programs, doctoral students often are in roles with master’s level students in which they hold a position of authority.
  • These multiple relationships should not be discouraged, but there needs to be an open discussion about keeping watch for boundary violations.

• SOCIALIZING
  • However minor the social situation may seem, supervisors still need to think about the potential issues that could surface and how attending a social function might either enhance or inhibit the professional relationship.
More Special Situations

• SEXUAL ATTRACTION
  • The attraction isn’t the problem. It is what
    individuals do with the attraction that determines if
    it is appropriate or inappropriate.
  • It is the supervisor’s responsibility to create a safe
    learning environment for supervisees.
  • If you find yourself sexually attracted to a
    supervisee, you should examine your feelings and
    consider that sexual harassment could be a real
    issue for you. You need to deal with this in your own
    therapy and supervision.
  • Preoccupation with clients is problematic, while
    transient sexual feelings are normal.
  • Sexual feelings for clients are common among
    students as well as professional practitioners. It is
    crucial for trainees acknowledge these feelings to
    themselves and to their supervisors and take steps
    to deal effectively with them.
  • It is important to normalize the feelings of attraction
    and distinguish them from feelings of sexual
    misconduct.
And More Special Situations

• SEXUAL INTIMACIES
  • Although multiple relationships are common in university settings, sex between students and their professors and supervisors is forbidden by ethical standards.
  • *It results in a loss of objectivity and an abuse of power.*
  • Additionally, it is poor modeling for supervisees and their relationships with clients.
  • If a problem does arise, the supervisor has the responsibility to take steps to resolve them in an ethical manner.
  • **Bottom line: If you want to practice ethically, don’t do it.**
  • Any form of sexual intimacy between supervisees and their clients is inappropriate and unethical.
  • The supervisor has a legal and ethical obligation to do everything possible to intervene immediately should sex between the supervisee and the client occur.
Combining Supervision and Counseling

- There is a basic agreement that the supervision process should concentrate on the professional development of the supervisee rather than personal concerns. *Supervision and counseling have different purposes.*
- Referrals should be made to a therapist when a supervisee experiences a personal problem that interferes with their providing care to the client.
- Personal problems or limitations of supervisees should be challenged during supervision.
- The purpose of discussing supervisee’s personal issues in supervision is to help them work with clients more successfully, not fix the problem.
Changing Roles and Relationships

• Students and supervisees can become valued colleagues
  • It is important to have open discussions to sort out any issues that may arise.
References
