



Position Statement

SUPERVISION IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

Supervision of educators is essential to school improvement and student success. Through professional supervision, the practices of administrators, teachers, and support personnel are observed, monitored, and evaluated to ensure implementation of appropriate and up-to-date services. Supervision serves to protect the public and improve educational outcomes. Therefore, it is essential that all school practitioners have access to knowledgeable professional supervision.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) strongly promotes the professional supervision of school psychologists by school psychologists at all levels as a means of ensuring effective practices to support the educational attainment of all children. Supervisors who are both knowledgeable about and experienced in the delivery of school psychological services promote adherence to high standards, ensure appropriate, high quality services to children and youth, and provide appropriate evaluation of personnel. Further, supervisors promote ongoing professional development as a means of improving practice and student outcomes, and adapting roles to meet the changing needs of the school community. NASP advocates a strong program of supervision based on professional standards, available to all practitioners regardless of experience and proficiency, and incorporating a broad range of techniques reflecting specific training in supervision.

DEFINITIONS: SUPERVISION

“... an ongoing, positive, systematic, collaborative process between a school psychologist and school psychology supervisor that focuses on promoting professional growth and exemplary professional practice leading to improved performance of all concerned—school psychologist, supervisor, students, and the entire school community” (p.1) National Association of School Psychologists’ Supervision Workgroup (1998)

Supervision in school psychology includes both professional and administrative supervision. It is provided through an ongoing, positive, systematic, collaborative process between the school psychologist and the school psychology supervisor. This process focuses on promoting effective growth and exemplary professional practice leading to improved performance by all, including the school psychologist, supervisor, students, and the entire school community (NASP, 2000).

Administrative supervision. Focuses on the functioning of the service unit, including personnel issues, logistics of service delivery, and legal, contractual and organizational practices. Administrative supervision addresses the performance of job duties in accordance with conditions of employment and assigned responsibilities, and is primarily concerned with outcomes and consumer satisfaction rather than discipline-specific professional skills. Administrative supervision may be carried out by individuals trained and credentialed in school administration and not school psychology.

Professional supervision. Refers to oversight of the specific professional practices of personnel within one's own profession, and requires specific training and knowledge in the area of supervision. Professional supervisors are responsible for supporting practices consistent with professional standards, promoting ongoing professional development to improve and update skills, and ensuring systems of personnel evaluation that are consistent with specific professional standards. Professional supervisors must collaborate with administrative supervisors to ensure appropriate and ongoing evaluation of models of service delivery. Professional supervision is only provided by a licensed/certified school psychologist or by an individual holding an equivalent title (e.g., school psychological service provider, school psychology specialist). NASP promotes access to both administrative and professional supervision for all school psychologists, regardless of work setting. Although an ideal situation would have professional supervision provided by individuals with administrative supervisory responsibility, NASP recognizes that different configurations of supervision will be necessary based upon available resources and organizational structure.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

NASP has adopted standards of service delivery including standards for supervision of practicum trainees and interns, new school psychologists, and experienced practitioners. These standards should guide service units in their implementation of supervision of school psychologists. As delineated in Unit Standard 5, Supervision (Guidelines for the Delivery of School Psychological Services, NASP, 2000), school psychological services units should ensure supervision of all levels of personnel in order to “ensure the provision of effective and accountable services.” NASP Standards address the qualifications of supervisors; the nature and frequency of supervision for practicum trainees, interns, new professionals, and experienced practitioners; and the supervisor's leadership in developing and evaluating effective and accountable services. NASP promotes the implementation of these standards in all school psychological services units:

Qualification of supervisors. Supervisors of school psychologists and supervisors of trainees should hold the Nationally Certified School Psychologist credential or the school psychology credential for the state, and have at least three years' experience as a school psychologist. Training and/or experience in the supervision of school personnel are desirable.

Frequency of supervision. Interns and first-year school psychologists, as well as others requiring such supervision, should receive at least two hours of supervision per week. Practicum and internship supervision further must be consistent with the requirements of the relevant training institution and NASP Standards for Training and Field Placements. Supervision and/or peer review should be available after the first year of employment to ensure ongoing professional development and support.

Evaluation. Supervisors of school psychologists should ensure that the evaluation of service units and individual practitioners is both summative and formative, and based upon specific, measurable objectives.

WHO NEEDS SUPERVISION?

NASP advocates for the availability of professional administrative and professional supervision to all school psychologists regardless of level of experience and proficiency. In each of several skills defined by the domains of practice, individuals may be novices, advanced beginners, competent, proficient, or experts. Regardless of proficiency, practitioners require supervision whenever they enter situations in which they have no previous experience, either in terms of the population with which they are working, or with regard to the procedures and/or tools used. Supervisors of school psychologists should adjust their supervisory strategies according to the skill level of the supervisee. Novice and advanced beginners require frequent, direct supervision to enhance skill development to ensure appropriate and effective practice. Although requiring less frequent, more indirect supervision, school psychologists at the proficient and expert levels continue to engage in the supervision process to help maintain objectivity, choose appropriate methods of child advocacy, and continually upgrade skills.

Expert and proficient school psychologists are themselves likely to supervise interns or other school psychologists, which requires development of their professional and administrative supervisory skills. At this level, supervision often focuses on “metasupervision,” or supervision of supervision and addresses the conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills required in supervision.

SUPERVISION METHODS AND STRUCTURES

Professional supervision techniques vary based on the supervisor’s ability to intervene and assist the supervisee or client, the reliance on technology, the amount of the supervisor’s time required, the level of supervisee skill required, and the intrusion on the client. Supervisory techniques may include didactic instruction and assigned readings; modeling; role-playing; direct observation; collaborative counseling, assessment, and consultation; reviewing audiotapes along with a typed transcript and analysis; reviewing audiotapes of sessions without transcripts; reviewing psychological reports and protocols; and reviewing case process notes.

All of these techniques may be used within the traditional one-on-one supervisory relationship. Most of them can also be used in alternative supervisory relationships, including peer mentoring, peer coaching, peer supervision, video conferencing, and telephone contact. Because proximity and knowledge of school district personnel and policies are substantial advantages in providing supervision, it is most desirable for a supervisor to be an employee of the same school district as a supervisee. However, not all service units have access to full-time school psychologist supervisors. Alternative models can provide satisfactory professional supervision, such as part-time supervisors; shared supervisors (collaboration among school districts or between districts and community agencies); peer supervision networks across and within districts; online supervision, etc. Individuals who do not hold a school psychologist credential should only provide administrative supervision. Professional supervision is only provided by a licensed/certified school psychologist or by an individual holding an equivalent title (e.g., school psychological services provider, school psychology specialist).

TRAINING AND EVALUATION OF SUPERVISORS

NASP strongly recommends that supervisors of school psychologists receive formal and/or informal training in supervision. It is recommended that beginning supervisors take coursework and participate in workshops in supervision, and that all supervisors monitor their skills by self-applying supervisory techniques. These may include taping and analyzing supervisory sessions, obtaining evaluative information from supervisees and administrators, and conducting evaluations of services. They also must seek consultation and collegial supervision and nurture a network of supervisors with whom they can consult regarding both administrative and professional issues, both inside and outside the school district. Any skill areas in which the supervisor is not at the competent level may be problematic and the supervisor therefore should access supervision, consultation, and collaboration from expert school psychologists to support supervisory responsibilities in these areas.

Just as it is essential that practitioners and service units undergo periodic evaluation to ensure quality and effectiveness, NASP also urges service units to conduct evaluation of supervisors and the program of supervision. This should include both external and self-supervision to ensure that supervisors provide accessible, constructive support, monitoring, and feedback to practitioners in a manner that promotes professional development and effective service delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Accountability in education encompasses not only ensuring quality instruction and measurement of student progress, but ensuring high quality, effective services that support student learning and behavior. Professional supervision is one means of addressing accountability for school psychologists. NASP recommends that all school psychological service units support the professional supervision of school psychologists by:

- Assigning one or more credentialed, experienced school psychologists responsibility for administrative and professional supervision of all staff school psychologists and interns
- Providing, as needed, opportunities for experienced school psychologists to gain initial and ongoing training in professional supervision
- Ensuring that all school psychologists have access to and support for receiving professional supervision as appropriate to their level of experience and expertise
- Providing multiple avenues and methods for obtaining supervision
- Ensuring the periodic evaluation of supervisors and the program of supervision

Further, NASP calls upon school psychology training programs to offer preservice training as well as continuing professional development in techniques and models of effective supervision.

REFERENCES

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RESOURCES

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