

**Long Island University**  
**Department of Counseling & Development**

**Tips for Best Practice In Counseling Supervision For Mental Health and School Counselors In Training**

All students in the Counseling Programs are required to successfully complete 100 hours in practicum and 600 hours of Internship in either a school or a mental health clinic/agency. The goal of this document is to provide a general framework that promotes uniformity and serves as a resource for issues related to counseling supervision of the LIU counseling interns.

The knowledge base of mental health and school counseling as professions has expanded, and the population it serves has become more complex. Therefore, it is important to the LIU Counseling Department to have assurance that all counselor interns are equipped with the necessary skills to deliver competent and ethical counseling practices. Equally important to the Department is the responsibility to protect clients.

The Department of Counseling and Development maintains that supervision is an essential and integral part of the training of our students and continuing education required for the skillful development of professional counselors. We concur that supervision protects clients, supports practitioners, and ensures that competent counseling professionals deliver professional standards and quality services.

Supervision is a complex concept, however for purposes of this document professional counseling supervision is defined as *the relationship between a trained counseling professional willing to oversee and supervise a novice counselor /supervisee/counselor in training in which the responsibility and accountability for the development of competence, comportment, and ethical practices take place*. The supervisor is responsible for providing direction to the counselor-in-training/supervisee, who applies counseling theory, standardized knowledge, skills, competency, and applicable ethical content in the practice setting. The supervisor and the counselor-in-training/supervisee both share responsibility for carrying out their role in this learning exchange.

It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the counselor-in-training/ supervisee provides competent, appropriate, and ethical services to the client, as well as to learn all the applied practice skills that a counseling student should be expected to know at the end of 600 hours of internship.

While there are many models of supervision, it is ultimately the responsibility of the supervisor to select the model that works best for the professional development of the counselor-in-training/supervisee.

The supervisory relationship is built on trust, confidentiality, support, openness, and empathic experiences. Other qualities inherent in the supervisory relationship include constructive feedback, safety, respect, honesty, and self-care. Counseling Supervision provides guidance and enhances the quality of work for both the supervisor and the counselor-in-training/ supervisee and, ultimately, the client.

Counseling supervisors that are providing supervision to counselor-in-training/interns from LIU Counseling Department should always familiarize themselves with the supervisory requirements of CACREP, the regulatory and accreditation body for professional counselors, as well as the NY State Education Department and School District's regulations.

There are three primary domains of the supervisory experience that may overlap. These are: administrative, educational/clinical and supportive.

- 1) **Administrative supervision** is synonymous with management. It is the implementation of administrative methods that enable counselors and or counselors-in-training to provide effective services to clients. Administrative supervision is oriented toward school/agency policies or organizational demands and focuses on a supervisee's level of functioning on the job and work assignment.
- 2) **Clinical/Educational supervision** focuses on professional concerns that relate to specific cases. It helps supervisees better understand counseling philosophy, principles and best practices, while they become more self-aware, and refine their knowledge and skills. Clinical/Educational supervision focuses on staff development and the training needs of the counselor-in-training/intern or professional counselor to a particular caseload. It includes activities in which the counselor-in-training/supervisee is guided to learn about assessment, treatment and intervention, identification and resolution of ethical

issues, and evaluation and termination of counseling services.

- 3) **Supportive supervision** addressed the concerns that affect the counselor-in-training/supervisee's ability/capacity to adequately perform or function. It decreases job stress that interferes with work performance and provides the supervisee with nurturing conditions that complement their success and self-esteem, thus encouraging self-efficacy. Supervisees are faced with increasing challenges that contribute to job stress, including the growing complexity of client problems, unfavorable physical work environments, heavy workloads, and emotionally draining environments such as vicarious trauma or ambivalent losses. Supportive supervision is underscored by a climate of safety and trust, where supervisees can develop their sense of professional identity.

### **Supervisor's Qualification**

The general qualifications and expectations for supervision during the internship/practicum experiences may include the following:

- 1) A master's degree in counseling, or a related profession;
- 2) Relevant certifications and licenses;
- 3) A minimum of two years of pertinent professional experience in the specialty area, i.e., in school or clinical mental health counseling;
- 4) knowledge of the program's expectations, requirements and evaluation procedures for students; and relevant training in counseling supervision;
- 5) Continuing education hours as required for maintenance of supervisory credentials in the practice jurisdiction;
- 6) Being free from sanction of the licensing board for violation(s) of practice standards;
- 7) Have competencies in the theories and various modalities of treatment and maintain currency through the use of professional journals and continuing education;
- 8) Providing support and encouragement in the learning context; and,
- 9) Counseling supervisors should be familiar with the administrative and organizational structure of the school/agency or practice domain of the supervisee.

### **Context of Supervision**

General contextual matters important to the supervision process include the following:

#### **Understanding Scope of Practice**

Supervision may be provided to address a variety of issues. Among the most common is supervision for school and or mental health counselors-in-training obtaining an advanced practice license, particularly, the clinical license, LMHC, and or the certification for school counselors. Supervisors must be sure they meet the qualifications to become a supervisor and have a clear understanding of the skills and knowledge that the supervisory relationship is designed to help the counseling supervisee/intern to develop.

#### **Interdisciplinary Supervision**

With the increasing focus on interdisciplinary practice in recent years, a professional from another discipline may supervise counseling interns, e.g., Clinical Social Workers, Clinical Psychologists, etc., Although this may be appropriate within the team or unit context, counselors should seek supervision or consultation from another school counselor or mental health counselor who is licensed or certified with regard to counseling practices and issues. Similarly, a counselor providing supervision to a member of another discipline should refer that supervisee to a member of her or his own profession for practice-specific supervision or consultation.

#### **Cultural Awareness and Cross-Cultural Supervision**

Counseling supervisors should adhere to the ACA Standards for Cultural Competence in Counseling Practice and have specialized knowledge and understanding about the culture of the client population served by the supervisee. Supervisors should be able to communicate information about diverse client groups to supervisees and help them to use appropriate methodological approaches, skills, and techniques that reflect their understanding of the role of culture in the helping process. The counseling supervisor who is supervising a counselor-in-training/supervisee with a different cultural background should develop knowledge about that culture as it relates to counseling practice. Primary sources of information may include the supervisee or other practitioners familiar with the supervisee's cultural community.

## **Dual Supervision and Conflict Resolution**

In circumstances in which more than one person is administratively or clinically supervising a supervisee simultaneously, it is best practice to have a contractual agreement or role of each supervisor, including parameters of the relationships, information sharing, priorities, and how conflicts will be resolved. If no agreement exists, the immediate counseling supervisor may have the final say. Supervisors who work with LIU Counselors-in-Training/Interns are required to sign and return a Permission Form and a Contract.

## **Conduct of Supervision**

The underlying agreement between counseling supervisors and supervisees/counselors-in-training includes the premise that supervisees/interns depend on the skills and expertise of supervisors to guide them. Respect for the different roles that supervisors and supervisees play in the supervisory relationship is a key factor in successful supervision. To maintain objectivity in supervision, it is important to:

- 1) negotiate a supervision contract with mutually agreeable goals, responsibilities, and time frames
- 2) provide regular feedback to supervisees on their progress toward these goals
- 3) establish a method for resolving communication and other problems in the supervision sessions so that they can be addressed
- 4) identify feelings counselors-in-training/supervisees have about their clients that can interfere with or limit the process of professional services, i.e., transferences and counter-transferences.

## **Confidentiality**

Counseling supervisors must ensure that all client information be kept private and confidential except when disclosure is mandated by law, or when the clients indicates self-harm or harm to others. Supervisees/Counselors-in-Training should inform clients during the initial interview that their personal information is being shared in a supervisory relationship. Supervisors also have an obligation to protect and keep the supervisory process confidential and only release information as required by the regulatory board to obtain licensure or if necessary, for disciplinary purposes.

## **Contracting for Supervision**

Once the supervisor agrees to provide the supervision for the time agreed on, it is the responsibility of that supervisor to follow through. The permission form and the Supervisor's Contract must be signed and submitted before the intern commences supervision or work at the site. The contract is a formal agreement between the Supervisor and the Institution that this "in the trenches" learning will be provided by a counseling professional who meets the qualification.

## **Leadership and Role Model**

Supervisors play a key role in the professional development of their supervisees. The actions and advice of the supervisor are keenly observed by supervisees, and consequently, influence much of the supervisee's thinking and behavior. Teaching is an important function of the supervisor, who models the behavior the supervisee will emulate. Supervisors should create a learning environment in which supervisees/counselors-in-training learn about the internal and external environments in which they work as well as the environments in which their clients find themselves each day.

## **Competency**

Counseling supervisors should be competent and participate in ongoing continuing education and certification programs in supervision. Supervisors should be aware of growth and development in counseling practice and be able to implement evidence-based practice into the supervisory process. Supervisors should also be aware of their limitations and operate within the scope of their competence. When specialty practice areas are unfamiliar, supervisors should obtain assistance or refer supervisees to an appropriate source for consultation in the desired area.

## **Supervisory Signing Off**

Supervisors should submit reimbursement claims only for services that they performed. "Signing off" on services performed by a counselor-in-training/intern/supervisee who is ineligible to seek reimbursement is fraudulent. Supervisors and supervisees should be aware of the NYS statutes and regulations addressing this matter in their jurisdictions.

## **Self-Care**

It is crucial for supervisors to pay attention to signs of job stress or any behavior that raises concerns. The Supervisor should address the concerns with their supervisees and themselves. LIU Practicum/Internship Supervisors should notify the Faculty Supervisor immediately if they observe inappropriate behavior by a Counselor-in-Training/Intern. In that even, a determination may be made to identify the concern(s) and provide appropriate intervention/support. **In some instances, a referral may need**

**to be made to the Department's Retention and Review Committee.**

### **Legal Issues**

Liability of supervisors has been determined by the courts and includes direct liability when negligence or inadequate supervision occurs by a supervisor and vicarious liability related to negligence of a supervisee. Supervisors and supervisees/interns/counselors-in-training should both have liability insurance.

Direct liability may be charged against a supervisor when inappropriate recommendations carried out by a supervisee/intern/counselor-in-training are to a client's detriment. It can also occur when a supervisor assigns duties to a supervisee/intern/counselor-in-training who is inadequately prepared to perform them. Supervisors must discuss boundary limitations and avoid any such violation. A supervisor should not supervise family members, current or former partners, close friends, or anyone in a therapeutic or familial relationship. Nor should a supervisor enter in a therapeutic relationship with a supervisee. Vicarious liability involves incorrect acts or omissions committed by the intern supervisee that can also be attributed to the supervisor.

Supervisors should:

- ensure that the services provided to clients by counselors-in-training/interns meet or exceed standards or practice
- maintain documentation of supervision
- monitor supervisee's professional work activities
- identify actions that might pose a danger to the health and /or welfare of the supervisees' clients and take prompt and appropriate remedial measures
- identify and address any condition that may impair a supervisee's ability to practice counseling with reasonable skill, judgment, and safety.

*Adapted from Best Practice of social Workers, NASW*

### **Ethical Practice**

Supervisors must read and know the ethical standards of practice by the ACA codes and they are held accountable and responsible to conduct their practice and the practice of their counselor-in-training/intern/supervisee by these standards.

**Counseling Program/Student Outcomes can be accessed at the following locations:**

**Under the accreditation tab for our CMHC program at:**

<http://www.liu.edu/CWPost/Academics/College-of-Education-Information-and-Technology/Academic-Programs/~link.aspx?id=4F4B4EF040804C8191C3505702EF65&z=z>

**Under the accreditation tab for our SCO program at:**

<http://www.liu.edu/CWPost/Academics/College-of-Education-Information-and-Technology/Academic-Programs/~link.aspx?id=6F282F99340F4977A4E2F659C9AE9D46&z=z>

### **References & Resources**

American Counseling Association. (2018) Code of ethics of ACA. Washington, DC

Austin, M., & Hopkins, K. (2004). Supervision as collaboration in the human services: Building a learning culture. New York: Sage Publications.

Falvey, J.E. (2002) Managing clinical supervision: Ethical practice and legal risk management: Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Haynes, R., Corey, G., & Moulton, P. (2003). Clinical supervision in the helping professions: A practical guide. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

National Association of Social Worker.(2013) Best practices in social work supervision. Washington, DC: National Association Of Social Work Board

Professional counselors whether in mental health agencies, schools or social work settings share many of the same skills and

best practice protocols. Some of these regulations are adapted from the, "2013 *Best Practice Manual of the National Association of Social Workers Association of Social Workers.*"

Any questions or follow up concerns with regards to Supervision or this document may be directed to Dr. June Ann Smith at [Jsmith@liu.edu](mailto:Jsmith@liu.edu) from the Department of Counseling & Development at Long Island University, 720 Northern Blvd, Brookville, New York, 11548.