Staff Retention in Child and Family Services

The Practice of Retention Focused Supervision

Workbook 2

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(inside of front cover page)

Dedication

This workbook series is dedicated to child and family service supervisors everywhere who work tirelessly with their staff to make the world a better place for children and families at risk.

Acknowledgements

First, we gratefully acknowledge the authors, Judith McKenzie, John McKenzie and Rosemary Jackson, for their incredible commitment in developing this unique and useful workbook series. This inspired team brought years of child and family service experience and a sense of urgency to the work that comes from "knowing" that children and their families need a stable workforce to help them realize their potential and that effective child and family service supervisors hold the key to staff retention.

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Introduction to Workbook Series

Purpose of this Series

The purpose of this training and series of workbooks is to increase child and family service agencies' effectiveness in developing and retaining their staff by applying information from research and best retention practices to their work.

The foundation for this material is the important mission of child and family service to provide safety, permanence and well being for children, within a context of family-centered practice. Underpinning this foundation is a heightened sensitivity to the potential impact of significant emotional events on child and family service professionals which can lead to excessive stress, burnout and, possibly, secondary trauma. Case materials, tools and skills integrated throughout this workbook series intend to honor and support leaders and supervisors as they cope with the value dilemmas and emotional content found in the "real world" of child and family services.

The ultimate goal of this curriculum is to improve retention practices and outcomes for child and family service agencies. With such an end in mind everybody wins: the staff, the agency, the families and children, and especially the supervisor, whose life is vastly improved by having a stable, loyal workforce.

This curriculum has been designed with a series of workbooks. A workbook is provided for each of the following subjects in the core curriculum series.

Workbook 1 – The Role of Leaders in Staff Retention: provides information, tools and methods for leaders to use to support supervisors in creating and sustaining a positive culture for staff retention.

Workbook 2 – The Practice of Retention-Focused Supervision: provides research information and supervisory competencies for retaining effective staff, including self-assessment and planning tools. It includes methods and tools for setting objectives, structuring the supervisory process and managing stress in the workplace.

Workbook 3 – Working with Differences: provides understanding, methods and tools for tailoring supervision to the diverse characteristics, learning and behavioral styles and professional development needs of staff.

Workbook 4 – Communications Skills: provides specific information, tools and activities to adapt communication skills to the supervisory relationship.

Workbook 5 – The First Six Months: provides a structure, methods and tools for orienting, supporting and training new staff during their first six months on the job, with particular attention to helping staff cope with and manage the stressors of the job.

Workbook 6 – Recruiting and Selecting the Right Staff in Child and Family Service: provides information on promising practices and tools for recruiting and selecting front line staff; includes profiles of desirable qualities needed in front-line supervisors and staff and methods for developing effective collaborations with universities.

Child Welfare is not rocket science. It's harder than rocket science.

- David Liederman, former CWLA CEO

The Underlying Principles of this Training Curriculum

The *Staff Retention in Child and Family Service* workbook series is based on a review of research literature in child and family service, human services and business. The research focused on the many studies that have to do with staff turnover and retention. Additionally, resilient workers and supervisors who stayed with their current agencies for at least two years were interviewed and surveyed in public and private agencies throughout Michigan to determine what underpins their commitment to the field. There was a strong consensus about what was learned about workplace retention across business, human service work and child and family service, but there were also some significant differences. Understanding the differences between child and family service and business is critical to retaining and developing staff in human service. Those differences are fundamental to the approach that is expressed in this training program and are summarized as follows:

Child and family service is challenging and life-changing work
Child and family service staff, many of whom are young and inexperienced, often make "god-like" decisions every day that have profound effects on the lives and destinies of children and their families. They see and experience the most tragic human conditions, extreme poverty, child neglect and abuse, inter-generational violence and substance abuse. Yet, they have to find a way to assure safety of children while working toward permanence and well being for both children and their families. Child and family service staff do this in a system that is under-funded, under-staffed, and sometimes chaotic and hardened to the plight of the people who are served by it and those who work in it.

This curriculum does not minimize the difficulties of the work (the reality of low pay, high workloads, and high turnover) but it doesn't belabor these issues either. It recognizes that these issues need to be addressed, especially when an agency is not competitive with other similar agencies offering the same service. This curriculum stresses that child and family service retention rates can be improved by understanding and building upon those resilient factors that attract people to and keep them in the profession.

Child and family service is mission and values centered
Those who enter the profession of child and family service are not motivated by profit. They are mission-driven. They are usually motivated by "doing good and making a difference" for others, particularly children who have been victimized. They come to accept that child and family service work is mainly about working with and through parents.

This curriculum offers an understanding of the mission and value-centered nature of this work as a context for all of the materials developed. To undervalue the significance of idealism and a need to help others in the motivation of staff would be wrong. The concept of mission is what energizes child and family service people and needs to be reinforced at every step of the retention process. Attention

to feelings, showing appreciation and strengthening resiliency are essential for prevention of burnout and achieving good outcomes for children and families.

The supervisor in child and family service is the most influential person in staff retention
The research shows that having a good relationship with the front line "boss" or supervisor is one of the most important factors in retention. This is even more essential in child and family service due to the stressful nature of the work. Managing one's own feelings and learning effective relationship skills to help others manage their feelings and assumptions are a big part of the work that has to be done. The inadequacies of the system, along with the multiple demands and challenging relationships, can cause stress, burnout and result in "secondary trauma" for child and family service staff. An effective supervisor will facilitate professional development of his/her staff by consistently modeling effective relationship and strengths-oriented behaviors that help staff grow through their most difficult and/or emotionally charged times and events. An effective supervisor will pay attention to the personal and professional growth needs of their staff and offer recognition, encouragement and support. To do this well, supervisors have to be aware of their own vulnerabilities, while building on their personal style and strengths.

What a new staff person experiences within the first year is crucial to retention
An experienced supervisor recognizes that over half of turnover occurs in a staff person's first year on the job. What a staff person first experiences, especially with their supervisor, will determine whether he/she will stay with the agency and ultimately build a career in child and family service.

Respect for a person's strengths, uniqueness, and rights are the primary elements in the success of all staff retention efforts
How a staff person is treated by the agency and, in particular, by his/her supervisor will become a mirror for how clients will be treated by staff. Honoring and building on staff strengths, including the individual's capacity to cope with stress, learn and change, is key to successful retention in child and family service. Preserving the dignity of the individual is not only important in staff retention. It is a principle that is essential to achieving positive outcomes with families. A fundamental belief in the resiliency of people provides a reservoir of hope in child and family service.

This training curriculum takes the view that all participants: agency leaders, supervisors and staff, are partners in improving retention of staff in child and family service. The agency's culture for retention will be continuously improved only to the extent that people share and learn from one another. Training materials, language and case examples are designed to be strengths-based and respectful of public and private agencies, supervisors, staff and families.

How to Use this Workbook

This training curriculum uses a workbook format for the following reasons:

- Participants who attend a training session have the information and tools at their fingertips to use as reference long after they attend the training
- Individuals can benefit from the program by using the workbooks as self-study tools, if they cannot attend a group training
- Learning activities appear throughout each workbook to encourage agencies and staff to use the materials in small groups during formal staff training or more informal sessions
- Participants attending the training can share the materials and coach others through the program
- Agencies can use the units within workbooks to review and build specific competencies e.g., when a supervisor is new to the position, following a performance review and/or when a need specific to the agency has been identified

Icon	Description
	Activity – this icon represents an activity that can be used by an individual for self-reflection and/or for small group discussions.
	Small Group Activity – this icon represents an activity that is best done in small groups where individuals can share insights and learn from each other.
	Quotes – this icon is to represent words of wisdom that are meant to be inspirational or to bring home an important point to the user.
	Case Study – this icon represents a case study where content from the workbook is applied to typical supervisor/staff situations and interactions.
	Important Points to remember – this icon represents a summary of the key points contained in the workbook unit.
	Tools – this icon represents a tool that can be adapted and used in the workplace to further enhance the supervisor's repertoire. All tools are provided in the appendix of each workbook for duplication and use in quantity.

Debriefing Small Group Activities

When discussion questions and/or other activities are used in a small group, it is helpful for someone to act as a facilitator and recorder of notes to engage the group in responding to at least two additional questions:

- What lessons did we learn from this experience?
- What implications does this have for what we will continue to do, start or stop doing in the future?

Sequence of Workbooks

All the workbooks were designed to stand-alone and can be used in any sequence based on the organization's and/or an individual's needs and priorities.

Each workbook has numbered units. For example Unit 3 in Workbook 3 will be numbered Unit 3.3. Units extracted from a workbook can be used in management and supervisory staff meetings, brief "Lunch and Learn" sessions, or in supervisor support groups. Using this material in the workplace is highly recommended because the sharing of ideas and synergy among like-minded people can aid and support individual growth and/or agency-wide culture change.

Participants can feel free to duplicate and share all activities and tools contained in these workbooks. Please acknowledge the source of the information when reproducing the materials.

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2.0 The Process of Retention Focused Supervision

Learning Objectives for Workbook 2

- Understand and apply the principles of motivation to supervision in child and family services
- Understand and assess supervisory competencies in the five functions of retention focused supervision
- Increase intentional use of the supervisory relationship to meet individual and organizational goals

This workbook series "raises the bar" on expectations for supervisors, especially in those areas that have to do with enhancing professional relationships to help their staff become increasingly more effective and professional. It is recognized that supervision in child and family services is very challenging. However, supervisors can improve their skills and results one step at a time, particularly in agencies where they are valued and supported.

Agencies that are committed to enhancing effectiveness will provide supervisors with the interpersonal support, specialized training and access to ongoing professional development experiences. As a result, supervisors will feel more empowered in performing their critically important roles.

The aim of Workbook 2 is to help supervisors become more intentional in their supervision and to make best use of supervisory time with their staff. It will introduce supervisory competencies that are known to motivate and encourage increasing confidence and staff commitment to a career in child and family services.

2.1 Making the Case for Retention Focused Supervision

Many child and family service administrators report that staff turnover in frontline child and family service positions is a serious problem in achieving and maintaining quality services for children and families. According to a recent federal General Accounting Office (GAO) study, "high turnover rates and staffing shortages leave remaining staff with insufficient time to establish relationships with children and families and make the necessary decisions to ensure safe and stable permanent placements."

Nationally, staff turnover rates in child and family service range from 30-40% each year. (NASW News, 2004) In a study of worker turnover conducted by the Michigan Federation for Children and Families in 2000, the turnover rate for foster care workers in Michigan's private agencies was as high as 49%. A more recent study in 2002 by the same group shows the turnover rate to be lower at 34%. Turnover rates will vary from urban areas to more rural areas, with rural areas generally having a more stable workforce. Also, turnover rates are affected by unemployment rates. When there is high unemployment, there is less mobility in the workforce in all businesses and professions.

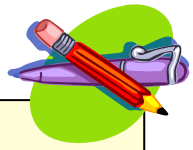
It is important for a child and family service agency to know its turnover rate and the reasons for fluctuations in the rate from year to year. Collecting data and understanding trends is a first step in consciously managing staff turnover. Workbook 1 in this series, *The Role of Leaders*, provides a tool to use in computing an agency or service unit's turnover rate. (Please see the appendix of this workbook for the tool, *Point in Time Method of Calculating Staff Turnover*).

Alice

Alice, a supervisor of a foster care unit in a large child and family service agency, is having a bad day. Jamie, one of her most senior staff with two years on the job, has just left her office after turning in her resignation. Jamie told Alice that she was burned out and was going to look for a job outside of the field where she could make more money and "have a life." She told her that she was tired of working with people who thought she was trying to ruin their lives.

That makes two open positions on Alice's unit, two caseloads that she has to cover and two positions to interview for, hire and fill. Her internal dialogue goes something like this: "Why is it that every time I finally get someone trained and up to speed they walk out the door? Is it me or is it the work? How can I possibly get this unit up to speed when I am always putting out fires? I feel like a juggler, with so many balls in the air it's only a matter of time before they all come crashing down!"

Activity: How Does Turnover Affect You?



Instructions: Please answer the questions that follow:

1. How does turnover of staff affect you personally?

2. How does turnover affect the work of your unit?

3. How does turnover affect your agency overall?

Staff retention is a dilemma that Alice shares with all committed child and family service supervisors in both the public and private sectors. It affects agencies across the country, with supervisors in every aspect of the field.

Staff retention is a complex issue. Child and family service staff face challenges that employees in other lines of work do not encounter. This is a profession that requires staff to work on a daily basis with people who are experiencing emotionally and often physically traumatizing events. Life-changing decisions must be made and high stress is inevitable. For these reasons, staff need supervisory relationships that can offer them support and insight that they are not able to find elsewhere.

The supervisor is the one person who can provide guidance that comes from a real understanding of the struggles involved in working with children and families during difficult times. For the most part, the supervisor has done the work, understands the personal investment that it requires and can look at the bigger picture, a view that can be obstructed when the staff person is on the front lines. But just having experienced front-line work and being good at it is not enough.

Supervisors need to be able to help their staff manage the emotional intensity of the work. They need to find ways to individualize their approach and communicate with staff who come from diverse backgrounds with different experiences and a variety of work styles. And they need to make sure that the needs of individual children and families are addressed and paperwork is completed on time. For new or struggling supervisors, having such a wide range of responsibilities can seem daunting.

The Supervisor's Responsibility for Retaining Staff

Research documents that the best way to keep good people is in the hands of the front line supervisor or "boss." (Kaye, B, Jordan-Evans, S., 2002) For example, the 2003 Federal General Accounting Office study attributes turnover to low pay in the field, high workloads, lack of supervisory support and insufficient training. However, officials and staff in all four of the states studied indicated that supervisory support either motivated workers to stay despite job stress or lack of supervisory support was a critical factor in their decisions to leave.

In most studies of employee retention and turnover, the quality of supervision is a determining factor in a staff person's decision to stay or leave an organization. Why? Because the factors that drive motivation and satisfaction within child welfare are largely within the supervisor's control.

In child welfare, a good supervisor who cares about and develops a strong connection with staff, starting from the first day of initial orientation, is in the best position to help them find what they want from their work because they can be:

> **Model and Mentor:** To achieve its mission, child welfare work depends on cultivating safe and healing relationships with children, families and communities. A

good supervisor will facilitate professional development of his/her staff by consistently modeling effective relationship behaviors that help staff through their most difficult and/or emotionally charged times and events.

Representative of Agency Culture: Most child welfare agencies are organized so that supervisors oversee management of workloads, monitor legal and service requirements and motivate their staff day-to-day. The supervisor represents the agency's culture by exemplifying how the agency respects and values staff and families.

Career Facilitator or Gatekeeper: Supervisors dispense what tangible retention benefits the agency has to offer as well as the "softer" benefits, including respect, flexibility and encouragement.

This is not to suggest that an agency's upper management and organizational culture do not have a very important role in staff retention. (Workbook 1 in this series discusses in detail *the Role of Leaders in Staff Retention*). But, given what retention research reports about why people stay in their jobs, supervisors still have the greatest power (and responsibility) in retaining their staff. The supervisor's style and relationship with his/her staff is of *standout importance* in attracting and retaining key talent. (Corporate Leadership Council, 1998) This means that the effective supervisor cannot abdicate responsibility but must take a proactive role in staff retention.

Important points to remember

- Nationally, staff turnover rates in child and family service range from 30-40% each year. (NASW News, 2004)
- Child and family service staff face challenges that employees in other lines of work do not encounter. Life-changing decisions that affect the lives of children and families must be made and high stress is inevitable.
- In studies of employee retention and turnover, the quality of supervision is a determining factor in a staff person's decision to stay or leave an organization.
- The supervisor is the one person who can provide guidance that comes from first hand experience and a real understanding of the struggles involved in working with children and families during difficult times.
- The effective child and family services supervisor must take a proactive role in staff retention.

2.2 Motivation in the Workplace

Low pay and high workloads are often cited as the primary factors in staff turnover. Despite the fact that these conditions are all too often real, they are not the complete story. Progressive public and private child and family service agencies are making progress in retaining staff by paying attention to other significant motivational factors in the workplace.

There have been many studies conducted to determine what motivates people at the work place. Some have been modeled after Abraham Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs.* His theory states that human beings are motivated by unsatisfied needs, and that certain basic needs have to be met before higher needs can be satisfied.

Maslow distinguishes human needs ranging from the basics of survival (e.g. air, food, water, shelter) to those higher order needs such as self-esteem, love, and self-actualization. He states that people cannot survive without the basics but once we have them, they tend to take them for granted and want to move onto the next levels of need.

Herzberg Motivational Theory

Frederick Herzberg, a behavioral scientist and author of *The Motivation to Work*, has taken Maslow's theory and applied it specifically to motivation in the workplace. Herzberg's theory categorizes workplace motivators into two groups: 'hygiene factors,' which are basic and necessary to survive; and 'motivational factors,' which are on a higher level. The idea is that once basic hygiene factors have been satisfied, they no longer motivate. In fact, employees begin to see them as entitlements. When hygiene factors are either taken away or when they have not been properly satisfied in the first place, they can have a discouraging and detrimental effect on retention of staff.

Examples of 'hygiene factors'

- Pay – salaries must be fair and on a par with others in the same field and geographic area
- Security – people must feel that their jobs are as secure as can be in the current work environment
- Working conditions – the workplace must be clean, safe and have other environmental elements that are typical for the field
- Fringe benefits – health care and personnel benefits must be competitive with others in the field
- Policies and administrative practices – vacation time, flex hours, dress codes and size of workload must be competitive with others in the field
- Interpersonal relationships – there must be an acceptable level of personal contact, absence of personal threats, humiliation, etc.

Agencies may not always have the ability to pay their staff what they are worth, but they can value the worthiness of their staff in every aspect of the exchange between staff, management

and supervisors. These "softer" motivational factors become even more significant in a traditionally underpaid profession. Herzberg would say that the motivational factors are those that lead the individual toward achievement of his/her own self-esteem and confidence.

Examples of 'motivational factors'

- Achievement – there must be a feeling of accomplishment and progress toward a goal
- Responsibility and meaningfulness – the individual must feel connected to his/her work with a feeling of pride and ownership and feel in sync with the agency's mission and values
- Recognition – individuals must feel that there is proper acknowledgement for the work and the contribution they make
- Opportunity for growth – paths must exist for advancement both in personal growth (furthering one's knowledge and skills) and career growth (advancement opportunities)

Adapting the Maslow hierarchy of needs to the workplace might look something like the chart that follows:

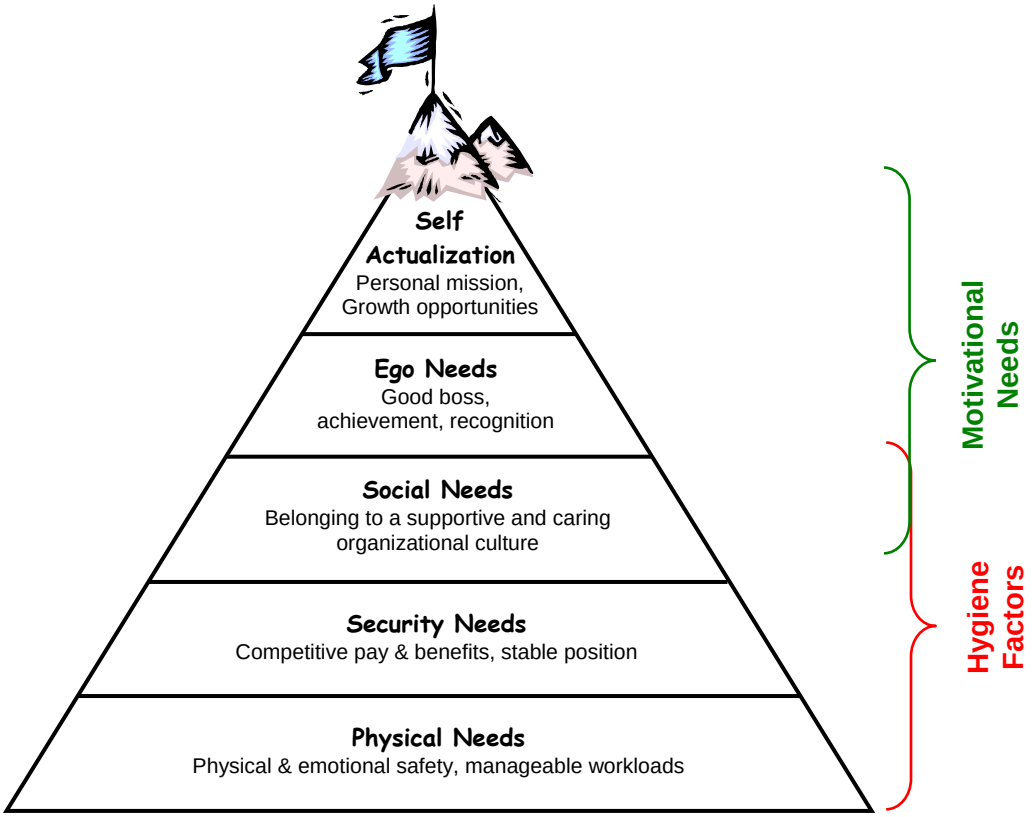


Figure 2.1 Hierarchy of Needs

Implications for Child and Family Service Agencies

An extensive review of the turnover research in child and family service indicates that employees leave their jobs because of low salaries and high workloads (hygiene factors). Once salaries and workloads are seen as reasonable and competitive in the field and for the geographical area, child and family service employees leave because of lack of job satisfaction, excessive stress and burnout, and lack of support from supervisors and organizations. While this is distressing information, the good news is that it is possible to develop supervisory and organizational practices that are designed to minimize unnecessary turnover.

A Resiliency Approach

For this project, interviews were conducted with 'resilient' supervisors and social workers in Michigan to determine why they stay in their positions. Resilient workers were defined as those who stay in their current agencies for at least two years. Interview findings were then compared with information from other research regarding retention in child welfare, other human service professions, and business.

The research indicates that people stay in child and family service for reasons that are common to most jobs, but also for reasons that are distinctive for human caring professionals. The distinguishing and most consistent retention themes found from child and family service interviews and the literature are those that have to do with personal characteristics, support for handling stress, burnout and secondary trauma and effective supervisory and peer relationships. Those prime factors are listed with additional important factors as follows:

Personal Characteristics:

- Sense of personal mission – human caring
- Strong feeling of effectiveness in making a difference with children and families
- Goodness of fit with child and family service work and the agency's mission
- Relevant education and length of time in the field
- Feeling of belonging and personal pride in the agency and its mission.

Supervisory Relationships:

- Support from and a good relationship with an effective supervisor
- Supervisor who focuses on professional learning, career and personal development
- Recognition and encouragement from the supervisor and agency

Professional Organizational Culture:

- Opportunities to learn and develop
- Safe work environment – physically and emotionally
- Concern for employee's families and personal needs
- Agency investment in staff development
- Support for handling stress, burnout and secondary trauma
- Supportive and satisfying relationships with peers
- Respect from management
- Flexibility in work hours, work setting and dress code

Implications for Child and Family Services Supervisors

In the child and family service agency, supervisors must "own" retention to be successful. Some practical ways that supervisors can demonstrate their commitment to retention include:

- Become actively involved in selecting the right staff for the team or unit who have a strong sense of personal mission and connection with the work and have relevant educational background and/or experience (Workbook 6 – *Recruiting and Selecting the Right Staff* – provides information and tools for finding staff who are a good "fit" for child and family services work.)
- Take charge of a new staff person's orientation, ensuring that staff are brought into an inclusive team and receive proper orientation to the work (Workbook 5 – *The First Six Months* – provides detailed structure for addressing the orientation period)
    - Assist staff to navigate the agency's infrastructure
    - Connect staff with peers and others who can support them and encourage their growth
- Exemplify caring and respect for staff at all times
- Help staff connect with the agency's mission and beliefs and manage the emotional intensity and stress of the work
- Build an evolving "professional development partnership" with each staff person, tailored to the individual's strengths, capacity and unique needs
- Plan and advocate for staff to have appropriate educational and training opportunities that are internal and external to the agency
- Support staff in identifying, balancing and meeting their personal and professional goals

Activity: Considering Your Own Resiliency

Instructions: Please answer the following questions. (It is also important to ask these questions of your staff from time to time.)

1. Why did you choose a career in child and family service?

2. Why do you stay in your agency?

Important points to remember

- Progressive public and private child and family service agencies are making efforts to retain staff by paying attention to significant motivational factors in the workplace.

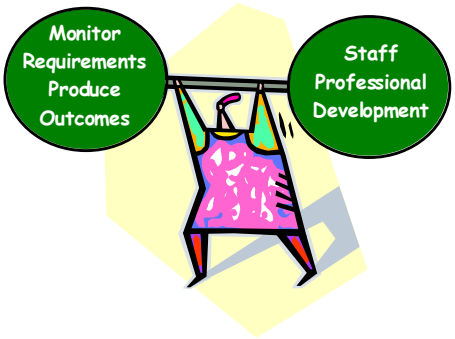
- Frederick Herzberg, a behavioral scientist and author of *The Motivation to Work*, categorizes workplace motivators into two groups: 'hygiene factors,' which are basic and necessary to survive; and 'motivational factors,' which address personal and professional self-esteem.

- The distinguishing and most consistent retention factors found from research and interviews involving "resilient staff" are those that have to do with personal characteristics, support for handling stress, burnout and secondary trauma and effective supervisory and peer relationships.

- In the child and family service agency, supervisors must "own" retention to be successful. This includes selecting the right staff in the first place and providing them with continuous support and growth opportunities starting with their first day on the job.

2.3 Five Functions of Retention Focused Supervision

Explicit authority for supervision in social work settings stems from the delegated responsibility given to supervisors to monitor and give feedback related to legal/agency requirements and case outcomes.



Implicitly, to do effective child and family services and meet accreditation and licensing requirements requires that supervisors be qualified and have the relationship skills to transmit the ethics, methods, and best practices known to the field. Supervisory relationships are expected to be a mechanism for the professional development of staff.

This dual responsibility—monitoring requirements and facilitating professional development of staff—is difficult to carry out under the best of circumstances. It is becoming increasingly more complex with increasing demands for accountability and larger workloads to monitor. Staff turnover further compromises the ability of supervisors to do the job they were hired to do.

Retention focused supervision is an intentional relationship that gives equal priority to the personal and professional growth of the individual staff person and achieving effective and timely outcomes for children and families. It requires supervisors to be proactive in using mentoring, coaching and consulting skills, while individualizing their approach to diverse personalities and levels of experience. At the core of this approach is the expectation that supervisors will model the attitudes and skills that staff will need to be effective with children and families.

In working with individual staff, there are five functions of retention focused supervision:

1. **Supporting the professional development of staff**: The retention focused supervisor is committed to each staff person's learning and growth, and views retention as a personal responsibility. There is a focus on building a professional development partnership with staff that aims to help them become increasingly self-aware and effective in working with others. Supervisory sessions or individual conferences are high priority and are adhered to consistently. Supervisory time is intentionally managed and valued as a series of opportunities to learn and grow.

2. **Individualizing supervision to diverse personalities and circumstances:** Retention focused supervisors are students of difference. They first understand their own preferred learning and behavioral styles and then individualize their approach to work with staff who may have different perspectives, strengths and approaches that work for them. Tailoring supervisory skills to build and draw on an individual employee's strengths is the "art" of retention focused supervision. These skills are addressed in depth in Workbook 3, *Working with Differences.*

3. **Utilizing effective communication and other skills**: Retention focused supervisors have the ability to communicate with all staff, including those that have different styles from their own. Of paramount importance are those communication skills that foster respect, empathy and encouragement. The ability to listen effectively, give constructive feedback, use open questions for debriefing staff and employing empathy are required skills for retention focused supervisors. Modeling these skills will help staff work through challenging situations with children and families, as well as those that arise within the agency. These skills are addressed in depth in Workbook 4, *Communication Skills*.

4. **Building a positive agency culture:** Retention focused supervisors have a particular role in building and reinforcing a positive culture within the agency. In a sense, supervisors are the agency's cultural ambassadors. They are in the best position to model respectful behaviors and encourage a safe, caring learning environment.

5. **Facilitating and teaching staff to achieve effective and timely outcomes:** Child and family service supervisors understand that their staff want and need to be effective to continue their commitment to the profession. They assist and support staff to do the work necessary to achieve timely outcomes for children and families. They work with their staff around building relationships and performing the necessary tasks to provide safety, well being and permanency for children and families.

Like a well-trained juggler, the highly motivated supervisor can learn to better manage all the important functions inherent in the role; and, as a result, can feel empowered, appreciated and gain greater satisfaction from his/her chosen profession.

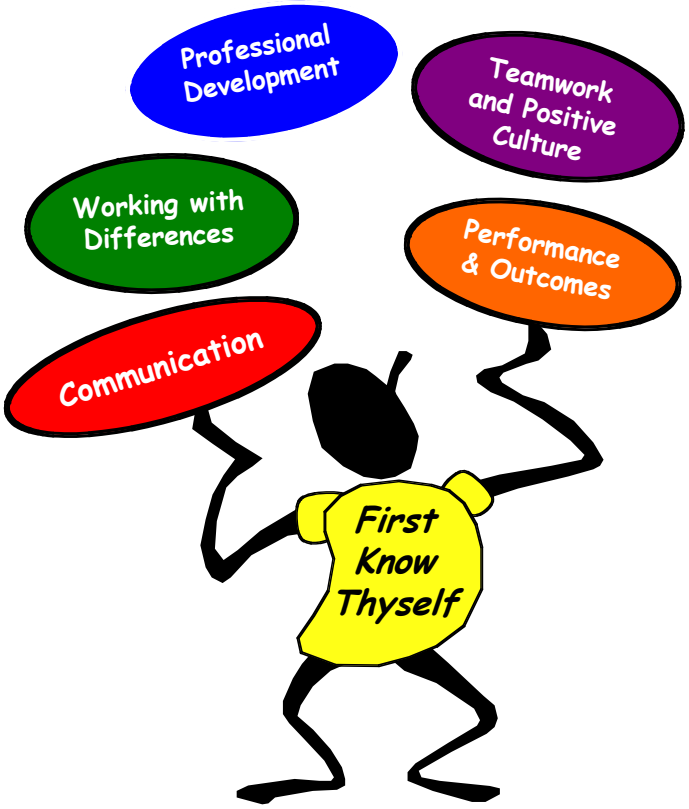


Figure 2.2 Five Functions of Supervision

Assessing Your Own Supervisory Competencies

One of the first steps to improving retention skills is for the supervisor to take a look at what he/she does well and what areas need attention. The activity that follows incorporates five functions of staff retention discussed in previous sections into an easy to complete self-assessment.

Activity: Assessing Your Supervisory Staff Retention Skills

Instructions:
Step 1. Complete the *Supervisor's Staff Retention Competencies Inventory Tool* provided

Step 2. Compile your scores as per the directions on the tool

Tool: Supervisor's Staff Retention Competencies Inventory

A) Complete the inventory

Read each statement and score yourself on the extent/frequency to which you do each of these behaviors. Use the following rating scale:

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither agree nor disagree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree

Professional Development: I support the personal and career growth of my staff. If asked, my staff would say that I…	Score
1. Take personal responsibility for retaining my staff	
2. Give priority to maintaining a schedule of regular, focused supervisory meetings	
3. Care about their values and help them connect their values with the agency's mission	
4. Work to build partnerships between myself and my staff	
5. Help staff cultivate and use self-awareness in their work with families, children and others	
6. Help staff set objectives for cases and personal development	
7. Encourage appropriate autonomy and decision making, based on an individual's experience and competence	
8. Support accountability and achieving outcomes for children and families by removing barriers and advocating for resources	
9. Help staff take responsibility for their own learning and development	
10. Encourage staff to take part in growth opportunities within the agency and professional education	
11. Model with staff the type of relationship that they need to develop in their work with children and families	
12. Link staff with others who can encourage their growth and job satisfaction	
Total score Professional Development	

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither agree nor disagree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree

Working with Differences: I respect and build on each individual's strengths and what makes each of them unique. If asked, my staff would say that I…	
13. Model respect for differences and diversity	
14. Understand my assumptions about individual staff and work to value his/her unique differences	
15. Treat staff respectfully and preserve their dignity	
16. Understand how my personal learning style impacts my interaction with staff	
17. Understand staff's learning styles and employ techniques that are designed to aid in their learning	
18. Understand how my behavioral style impacts my interaction with staff	
19. Understand my staff's behavioral style and maintain flexibility in working with staff whose styles differ from my own	
20. Understand and manage my emotions and those of staff	
Total score Working with Differences	

Communication Skills: I model the relationship and communication skills that I want my staff to emulate with their clients. If asked, my staff would say that I…	
21. Tailor my communication based on who I am, who my staff are and what the situation requires	
22. Listen carefully to what is being communicated and summarize what I hear	
23. Ask questions that draw out additional information	
24. Look for and evaluate nonverbal cues	
25. Identify and work with the feelings behind the words	
26. Keep an open mind and ask open questions	
27. Tell the truth and give thoughtful feedback that focuses on actions and not attitude	
28. Give feedback that works to instruct and assist staff rather than alienate them	
29. Ask clarifying questions to better understand staff emotions, attitudes and behaviors	
30. Challenge staff to rethink their blind spots, assumptions and values	
Total score Communication Skills	

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither agree nor disagree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree

Culture and Environment: I understand that supervisors are cultural ambassadors for the agency. If asked, staff would say that I…	***Score***
31. Place a high priority on staff retention and make it part of everyone's responsibility	
32. Maintain physical and emotional safety in the workplace and have safety policies and plans	
33. Develop and engage a multi-cultural workforce at all levels of the agency	
34. Care deeply about staff and their families and encourage balance between work and personal life and having fun in the workplace	
35. Support and encourage staff for their commitment and work on behalf of families and children and celebrate accomplishments	
36. Give staff appropriate autonomy to work in their own creative ways	
37. Promote a culture of continuous learning and development	
Total score Culture and Environment	

Performance and Outcomes: I want my staff to be successful on the job and earn the respect of others. If asked, my staff would say that I…	***Score***
38. Teach and reinforce policies, procedures, and protocols relevant to the job	
39. Model and teach how to effectively manage the workload	
40. Help them make difficult decisions and set priorities	
41. Teach child and family assessment skills	
42. Teach report writing skills	
43. Teach how to access and use community resources	
44. Find ways for staff to do more of what they love to do	
45. Look for innovative and customized ways to reward and recognize talented people	
46. Differentially assign work to the staff who are most passionate about it	
47. Give credit and spotlight to staff	
48. Give continuous feedback on individual staff performance	
49. Conduct affirming and timely performance reviews	
50. Find creative ways to encourage teamwork to manage workloads	
Total score Performance and Outcomes	

B) Summarize your scores

1. Circle the number on the chart shown below that best approximates how you scored in each category.

	Supporting Staff Development	Working with Differences	Communication	Building Positive Culture	Support Performance and Outcomes
Strongly Agree	60	40	50	35	65
	54	36	45	31	58
Agree	48	32	40	28	52
	42	28	35	24	45
Neither agree nor disagree	36	24	30	21	39
	30	20	25	17	32
Disagree	24	16	20	14	26
	18	12	15	10	19
Strongly Disagree	12	8	10	7	13

2. Now draw a line through each of the five circles connecting them on the chart. How do your scores compare? Are they in balance or are some higher and some lower?

3. Look over your assessment scores and decide if there are any line items that you feel are especially significant. Circle those that you think are most important and want/need to work on.

Creating Your Personal Development Plan- Retention Competencies

Activity - Developing a Personal Action Plan to Improve Retention Competencies

Instruction:

Step 1: Review the results from your *Supervisory Staff Retention Skills Inventory*.

Step 2: Choose three skills that are important to you. List these on the chart provided and write in at least one action that you are prepared to commit to.

Tool: The Things I Will Do – To Improve My Supervisory Staff Retention Skills

The skills I want to improve	What I can do by next week

1. My first step will be to…
2. I will ask for help from _____ to do…
3. I will know that I am making progress by…
4. I will reward myself by….

Important points to remember

- Retention focused supervision is an intentional relationship that gives equal priority to the personal and professional growth of staff and achieving effective and timely outcomes for children and families.

- There are five functions of retention focused supervision which are:
  - Supporting the professional development of staff
  - Individualizing supervision to diverse personalities and circumstances
  - Utilizing effective communication and other skills
  - Building a positive agency culture
  - Facilitating and teaching staff to achieve effective and timely outcomes

- By completing the *Supervisor's Staff Retention Competencies Inventory* in this workbook, supervisors can pinpoint areas of strength and skills they want to improve.

2.4 Professional Development of Staff

Human service relies on the supervisor's intentional use of self to successfully support the professional development of staff. This workbook addresses those attitudes and skills that are of vital importance in laying the groundwork for staff retention as detailed in the following competencies:

Take personal responsibility for retaining my staff
Give priority to maintaining a schedule of regular, focused supervisory meetings
Care about their values and help them connect their values with the agency's mission
Work to build partnerships between myself and my staff
Help staff cultivate and use self-awareness in their work with families, children and others
Help staff set objectives for cases and personal development
Encourage appropriate autonomy and decision making, based on an individual's experience and competence
Support accountability and achieving outcomes for children and families by removing barriers and advocating for resources
Help staff take responsibility for their own learning and development
Encourage staff to take part in growth opportunities within the agency and professional education
Model with staff the type of relationship that they need to develop in their work with children and families
Link staff with others who can encourage their growth and job satisfaction

Building a Professional Development Partnership with Staff

The work of human service is too stressful and too demanding to be carried alone. Staff are involved in complex interactions with children and families that they can only share with a supervisor who makes them feel safe and valued for the work that they are doing. The retention focused supervisor understands this and forms a partnership with the staff person utilizing trust and collaboration. Through this partnership, staff feel that there is a shared responsibility with the supervisor that helps to reduce feelings of isolation and stress. The message to the staff person is that the time spent with him/her is important and valuable to the work that is being done with children and families.

The Importance of Mutual Trust and Respect

Being trustworthy, communicating a consistent message that is aligned with the organization's mission and purpose, and treating staff with respect are core features of a supervisory style that works to retain staff. Supervisors build trust by:

- Giving priority to maintaining a regular schedule of supervisory sessions with staff
- Doing what they say they will do
- Finding necessary resources and breaking down barriers so work can get done
- Creating an environment where staff feel physically and emotionally safe
- Showing care and concern for individual staff and their families
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Being respectful and discreet in work with staff – what happens in supervision stays in supervision
- Being sincerely interested in and open to the needs of staff and the children and families they serve

Good Advice

Alice has set up an appointment with her program manager to talk about her frustration regarding her inability to hold on to qualified staff. Vivian has been Alice's supervisor since she took on the supervisory position two years ago. Vivian would be surprised to learn that Alice considers her to be her mentor, but she has always been interested in Alice and is pleased to see the progress she has made since she became a foster care supervisor. Alice feels a connection with Vivian and looks to her for input.

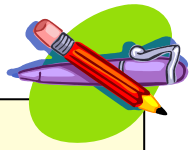
When Alice meets with Vivian, she gets right down to business telling Vivian about the problem she is having retaining experienced foster care workers. "The minute I get them up to speed and they can function on their own, they walk out the door. It just seems like all I do is hire and train new staff." Alice goes on to lament that with reading and editing all of the reams of reports and making sure that placement quotas are up, she just can't keep up with training new people. "That and the stress of being a single mother and my mother's illness is starting to take a toll on me," she says.

Vivian asks Alice why she has stayed in child and family service. "Well it sure isn't for the money or the high praise I get from my staff every day," Alice says with a laugh. "I don't know, maybe I am just idealistic enough to think that I might be doing something good for kids and their families. You're the one who got me hooked on this child and family service thing you know. If you remember correctly, I wanted to be a school social worker." Vivian laughs and says: "I guess the secret is getting your staff hooked too and then helping them remember why they're hooked."

Only when real trust and respect have been established can self-discovery and learning occur. The retention focused supervisor who has established a trusting relationship with staff can give them support and permission to take an honest look at their own strengths, feelings and progress.

Everyone can think of someone in their lives who mentored or coached them in some aspect of their growth and development. These are people who have made a difference. Human service supervisors who are retention focused utilize an approach in working with staff that aims at incorporating mentoring, coaching and consulting skills. The idea is to have supervisors understand and selectively use those skills that support the personal growth and development of the individual staff person, while respecting his/her strengths and autonomy.

Activity: Building a Professional Partnership



Instruction:
Think about the best supervisory relationship you have ever had and complete the table below.

1. How did this person go about developing your trust?

2. What specific direct or indirect techniques did this person use to build a professional development partnership with you?

3. Is there anything you can do differently to develop a professional development partnership with your staff, based on your personal style?

2.5 Increasing Effectiveness of the Supervisory Process

Professional supervision takes place every day in planned and informal encounters with staff, in groups and in individual settings. Though the supervisor may have a very strong and natural supervisory style, by becoming more self-aware and intentional in work with staff, he/she can enhance personal effectiveness. This section details the major types of supervisory meetings and encounters, and provides suggestions and tools for supervisors to use.

One-on-One Supervisory Sessions

Scheduled supervisory meetings need to be planned and focused in order to be productive. This is an opportunity to meet with staff one-on-one and/or in supervisory groups to support and assist them in meeting agency and professional goals. The platform for these sessions is usually the individual staff person's performance objectives, caseload and other assignments. Conversations are about solving problems; accessing internal and external resources; removing barriers to achieving outcomes and/or getting paperwork done; encountering conflicted relationships with specific clients, other staff members, or external agencies; and facing personal struggles or issues that may impact the individual's performance.

The tool, *Planning and Structuring Productive Supervisory Meetings*, is provided to help supervisors assess and plan effective supervisory meetings with staff.

Tool: Planning and Structuring Productive Supervisory Meetings

Before the meeting

☐ Develop a regular schedule of meetings with each staff person and strictly adhere to the time scheduled for the meeting

☐ Create a comfortable and confidential environment for holding meetings

☐ Resist any unnecessary interruptions including cleaning off your desk or table

☐ Prepare for the meeting:
- Review the objectives you and your staff person established related to his/her performance
- Reflect on your last meeting with the staff person. What action items were established?
- Did you follow through on actions you promised to do?
- Review case materials and cases that are to be discussed
- Reflect on the staff person's unique strengths and style
- Reflect on recurring themes from previous meetings and where the staff person might be stuck and need your help to progress
- Consider what meeting outcomes would benefit the agency, the staff person and you
- Be aware of your own work style, your current state of mind and emotions

During the meeting

☐ Be personable, even if it is not your customary style. Pay attention to what the staff person may be currently bringing to the session including his/her stress level, emotional state and readiness to tackle difficult issues

☐ Ask the staff person what would be a good outcome for him/her as a result of this meeting; share outcomes that you are seeking

☐ Develop an agenda for the meeting with the staff person, at the beginning of the meeting

☐ If you prepared the agenda previously, make sure you engage the staff person in making changes, as necessary

☐ Follow your agenda as appropriate, but stay flexible to address crises or important professional development issues that come up

☐ Use listening, clarifying questions, reflection, empathy, encouragement and other communication skills to engage and empower staff and to gain necessary information and give feedback

☐ Support staff in making difficult case decisions

☐ Challenge staff on blind spots and recurring themes, including relationship issues with you or others, as appropriate

☐ Provide feedback on case reviews, outcomes and agency requirements

☐ Review action items from last meeting

☐ Develop mutually agreed upon action items

☐ Plan the agenda and schedule next meeting

After the meeting

☐ Follow through on your assignments

☐ Give feedback to staff on progress, information and resources as needed

Activity: Productive Supervisory Meetings

Instructions:
Step 1: Consider a recent scheduled supervisory session you held. Use the tool, *Planning and Structuring Productive Supervisory Meetings*, to review your session and plan the agenda for your next session

Step 2: Please answer the following questions:

1. What went well?

2. What did not go so well?

3. What will you do differently next time?

Other Supervisory Encounters

No Time to Talk

Alice is hurrying down the hall to her office. She is going to be late for her conference call, which she hasn't prepared for yet. This morning is off the charts with one problem after another. "Why is it always like this on Monday?" Alice mumbles under her breath.

Ashley spots Alice from her office. Ashley is new to Alice's staff, in fact this is her first job out of college. "Alice, got a minute?" she calls as she gets up from her desk and joins Alice in the hall.

Alice grimaces, "Ashley, I'm kind of in a jam this morning. Can it wait until supervision on Wednesday?"

"Yeah, I guess so, but Mrs. Johnson, you remember, she has Jeff and Joey, well anyway she is getting kind of pushy about what I'm going to do about Jeff being expelled from school again. I was kind of hoping we could talk about it so I could call her back today."

Alice knows that Mrs. Johnson is a big advocate for the children in her care, but she can be a bit pushy. "Ashley, I'm swamped right now. You're going to have to learn how to deal with the foster parents or you're never going to make it in this job," Alice says as she enters her office. "Let's talk about it on Wednesday." Alice closes her door.

Ashley is left standing in the hall.

It is important to understand that a supervisor can spend time planning scheduled meetings and conducting these well; but, in the heat of the moment, can destroy a supervisory relationship by acting rude, abrasive, by being disrespectful to a staff person or by violating his/ her personal boundaries or trust. No one is perfect or "on" all of the time, especially under stress. When uncomfortable or inappropriate situations do occur, it is best for the supervisor to acknowledge and initiate a discussion about what happened and apologize when appropriate. Humility goes a long way in restoring confidence in a relationship that has been injured. Some tips for handling unscheduled supervisory encounters follow:

Impromptu Meetings

- Clarify in advance the type of situations that are considered to be crises and how staff need to involve their supervisor when such situations arise
- Follow agency policy and protocol in crises and/or high-risk situations
- Remember, staff who are managing a crisis case will need the supervisor to be accessible in person and/or by telephone and feel comfortable in approaching him/her anytime – day or night

- Keep in mind the individual's ability to manage ambiguity and crisis, their level of experience and level of stress and adapt the supervisory approach accordingly
- Always treat the staff person and others involved with respect and empathy
- Try to provide a private, confidential setting to discuss a crisis; the lunchroom or hallway will not do
- Involve others in crisis meetings on a need-to-know basis
- Mobilize resources as needed to support staff
- Alert agency superiors in advance, if a crisis poses potential high-risk to the staff, child, family and/or agency
- Double team a crisis case and/or accompany the staff person in the field, when there is a safety concern and/or other need
- Do crisis debriefing; conduct a review of how the situation was handled with the appropriate person or persons involved, after the fact; take this time to examine lessons learned and to prepare for handling a similar situation next time
- Instill confidence, hope and encouragement during times of crisis

Staff or Workgroup Meetings

- Develop and follow a meeting agenda and schedule
- Use meeting time productively, respecting how important time is to staff
- Establish and reinforce "rules of engagement" for meetings to be followed by staff and supervisors alike
- Honor individual's confidentiality in meetings
- Model dignity and respect for all staff and their ideas in meetings
- Utilize and model effective communication and group process skills
- Honor diversity and individual style differences
- Champion ideas, not individuals
- Whenever possible, discuss disruptive individual staff behaviors outside of the meeting and in private

Reviewing and Giving Feedback on Case Materials Submitted by Staff

- Try to give feedback in person
- Give positive, specific feedback whenever warranted; don't underestimate the value of positive recognition and encouragement
- Balance feedback by focusing on strengths first and then dealing with areas for improvement
- Help staff tie requested change to personal career goals
- Give precise, detailed examples of information needing change
- Give reasons for asking for or suggesting the change
- Help staff figure out how to make the needed changes
- Help remove obstacles to getting the work done in a timely way
- Acknowledge and celebrate progress

Informal discussions/encounters

- Pass on information that staff need to know in between meetings (if the information seriously impacts their job, it is best to do this in private)
- Be friendly and upbeat
- Show genuine caring for the individual and his/her family
- Use humor and encourage fun, as appropriate

Memos, notes and email

- Address staff properly; use please and thank you
- Use a positive tone in written communication to staff; try to come across as friendly, respectful and approachable
- Be professional; don't use derogatory comments
- Resist passing on chain emails
- Resist giving performance feedback in emails
- Give positive feedback and encouragement
- When answering emails, resist "copying all" unless absolutely necessary
- Re-read the written piece before sending it; screen it for potential misunderstandings or innuendos
- Avoid using all capitals or huge print—it may seem like shouting
- Avoid using all lower case or lack of punctuation - it may seem like a monotone

Activity: Other Supervisory Encounters

Think back to the Alice vignette, *No Time to Talk*, and answer the following questions:

1. What effect do you think Ashley's encounter with her supervisor had on her?

2. What are some steps that Alice could have taken to avoid giving Ashley the brush off?

3. Once the exchange happened in the hall, what could Alice have done to deal with Ashley after the fact?

4. Think about and write down one experience you have had with unscheduled encounters with your staff. How would you change this, if you could?

Important points to remember

- Though the supervisor may have a very strong and natural supervisory style, by becoming more self-aware and intentional in work with staff, he/she can enhance personal effectiveness.

- Scheduled supervisory meetings need to be planned and focused in order to be productive. The tool, *Planning and Structuring Productive Supervisory Meetings*, can be helpful in assessing and planning supervisory meetings.

- Impromptu or unstructured supervisory encounters can be very important in maintaining an effective relationship and/or impacting the relationship in a negative way. Supervisors cannot be "on" all the time, so when difficulties arise, it is best to deal with them immediately and responsibly. Detailed tips for handling different types of unscheduled situations are provided in this unit.

2.6 Frequency, Intensity and Content of Supervision

No one approach to supervision works for every supervisor or staff person. Retention focused supervision requires that supervisors know their own style, assess and adapt that style to their individual staff person's level of experience, unique personality and other diversity factors. Workbook 3 *Working with Differences* addresses supervisory competencies in more detail.

Frequency and Intensity of Supervision

Supervisory involvement will vary in terms of level of control and intensity, based on the several factors, as illustrated in figure 2.3, *Supervisor's Level of Intensity in Working with Staff.* These factors include:

- The staff person's level of experience (including life experience, time on the job, etc.)
- The level of personal and professional stress the person is experiencing
- The level of risk inherent in a particular situation

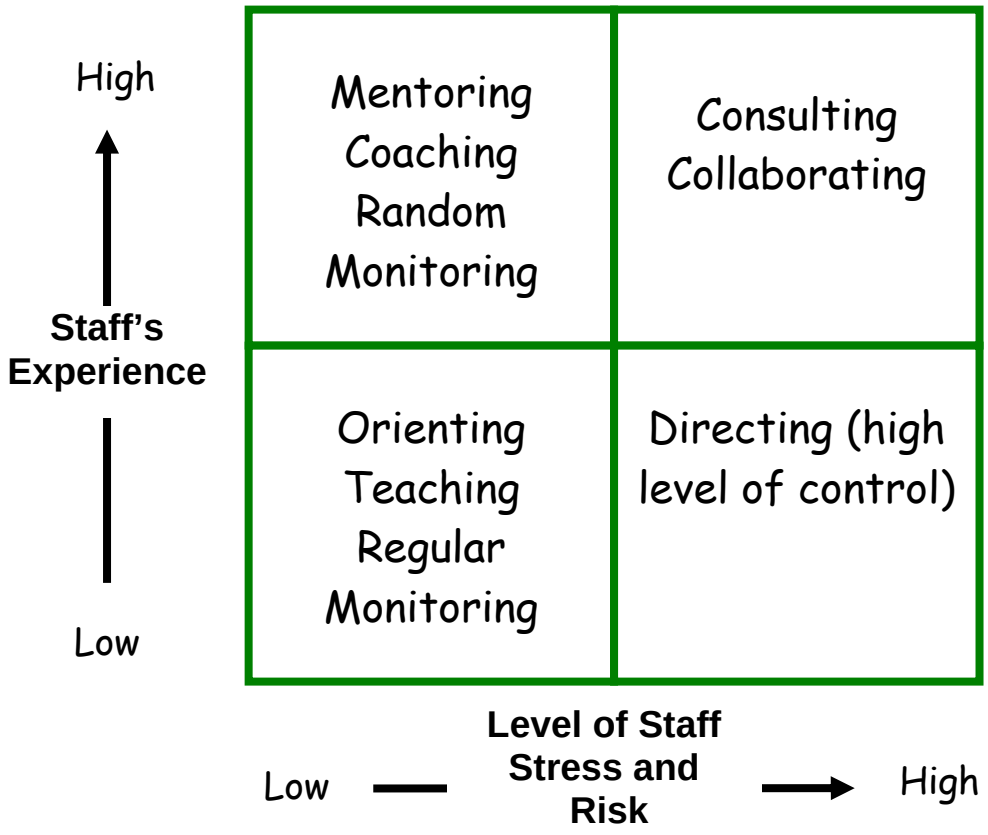


Figure 2.3 Supervisor's Level of Intensity in Working with Staff

Effective supervisors will gauge where each individual staff is related to experience, stress and risk and vary their style accordingly. Variations in style and level of intensity are described below.

Orienting/Teaching - when staff are new to the job or have limited experience, supervisors will need to be more involved through orienting, training, providing structure, directions and teaching. During this stage the new employee is trying to master information, requirements and routines. (Workbook 5, *The First Six Months*, gives a detailed structure for orienting and supporting new staff during their first six months to a year on the job.)

Directing – when a staff person is inexperienced and there is high-risk or a critical function to be performed, the supervisor is likely to be more directive and structured in his/her approach. During these situations, the staff person is likely to need someone to accompany him/her into the field or walk them through procedures step by step.

Coaching/Mentoring- as staff mature on the job they require less oversight, with the supervisor acting more as a mentor or coach. The supervisor provides information and tips as needed, but usually is using clarifying questions to enhance the staff person's problem-solving skills and increase autonomy. The focus is on employee growth and development.

Consulting/Collaborating – when in crisis, the more experienced staff will usually require a partnering, consulting or collaborating relationship. The focus in this relationship is to add agency endorsement to legitimate decisions and actions and share responsibility for difficult decisions. In very high-risk situations, the supervisor or higher level person may need to make a decision upon consultation from the staff person.

Monitoring – a necessary part of working with all staff. With inexperienced staff, most cases will be monitored for compliance. As staff gain more experience, cases will be randomly selected for performance monitoring at periodic intervals.

Overtime, the effective supervisory relationship will naturally evolve from a relationship that concerns itself with teaching and acting as a role model for the staff person, to a consultative and mutally growth enhancing partnership.

Activity: Intensity of Supervision

Instructions:
Step 1: Go to *Figure 2.3 Supervisor's Level of Intensity in Working with Staff* which illustrates various levels of supervision.

Step 2: Put a dot on the chart for each member of your staff that best characterizes your level of supervision with that person.

Step 3: Ask yourself the following questions:

Where is your greatest concentration of dots? Is this appropriate for the maturity level of your staff?

What does this say about your style of supervision? For example, do you tend to micro-manage or do you tend to be unstructured in your work with new staff?

What actions might you take to give the appropriate level of support to each member of your staff?

Content and Focus of Supervision

The content of supervision includes cases, projects and special assignments given to staff.

An important role of supervisors is to assure that children and families served by the agency are receiving required and effective services. Cases are reviewed and discussed for several reasons:

1. Monitoring licensing, federal, state and contractor requirements
2. Helping staff use agency and professional processes in assessing and working with families and children (technical or hard skills)
3. Helping staff become increasingly more professional and effective in their day-to-day work with children and families (professionalism and relationship skills or soft skills)

The supervisor needs to be proactive in selecting cases for review and discussion and will also be responsive to case situations that staff may be struggling with and bring to their attention; particularly, where there are patterns developing that need the supervisor's involvement.

Monitoring
The focus of case reviews is to monitor compliance with certain performance factors and outcome measures. For example: Are the required number of staff home visits or sessions being accomplished? Are children visiting with siblings and parents? Is the required paper work completed on time? Are cases progressing to meet required outcomes and timelines? Are regular reports filed on time? Is the staff person attending court, working with parents, showing up for appointments and meetings? Are licensing and accreditation standards being met?

Supporting Agency and Professional Processes
Using cases, the supervisor can assist staff to use agency and professional standards and protocols to achieve case goals and outcomes. For example: Are agency case protocols being followed? Are documents and reports communicating appropriate assessment and case management skills? Is the staff person being strengths-oriented in his/her approach? Is there sufficient progress being made in cases? Is the quality of case plans and reports sufficient?

Enhancing Professional Development
An important purpose of supervision is to support the professional development and autonomy of each staff person. This means that both the supervisor and staff are engaged in an ongoing process of continuously improving self-awareness and self-mastery.

Through case discussions and case reviews, the supervisor develops an understanding of how staff's values and life experiences can influence their ability to work with certain clients. Does the staff person have effective working relationships with children and families, other agencies, peers, resource parents, and others necessary to do good work? Does the staff

person demonstrate sufficient maturity to do the job they are assigned to do? Does the staff person demonstrate cultural competency?

In some instances, the client's behavior or situation may bring out unresolved family or personality conflicts. Values and personal conflicts can affect a worker's objectivity and performance. It is the supervisor's responsibility to help their staff identify and work through conflicts that affect their ability to keep their work centered on the best interests of clients. Conflicts may be manifested in the staff person's difficulties in working with certain personalities; over-identifying with the neglect or abuse of a child or adult; having difficulty in working with racial, cultural or social class differences; or establishing inappropriate boundaries with clients. Using techniques, such as listening and clarifying questions, can be very effective in helping staff put such potential conflicts in perspective.

In most instances, staff will be able to use supervision to strengthen objectivity and make the necessary changes to be even more effective with their clients. Staff who are able to use supervision in this way can become very effective professionals. In some instances, it will be important for the supervisor to encourage outside therapy or to counsel the staff person out of the agency and/or the profession. Workbook 4, *Communication Skills*, and Workbook 3, *Working with Differences*, contain very helpful tools and methods for supervisors to use in mentoring and coaching their staff.

Case Study: Peg

Peg is a family therapist in a child and family service agency. Prior to getting her MSW several years ago, she had worked in the medical field for many years. Peg has been with her current agency for some time and enjoys a reputation as a committed and competent therapist who is willing to pick up the slack and take on "high-risk" cases. Her current supervisor, Maria, is quite a bit younger than Peg and has not been with the agency as long as Peg has. Maria sees Peg as an asset to her staff.

Maria and Peg are engaged in a weekly supervisory session.

Peg: So you see the Anderson's are all doing pretty well. Once we got that medical evaluation, well that put everything into perspective and Mrs. Anderson has really stepped up to the plate to parent Timothy.

Maria: Peg, that's great! It's nice to have a few real successes along the way. I know how hard you worked on this case.

Peg: (Smiles)

Maria: You know who you haven't talked about yet? The Grant family. What's been going on with them?

Peg: (Shifts in her chair.) Well you know Mrs. Grant is really not very engaged with me. I can't tell you how many times I called her once the case was assigned to me and we have only managed to meet twice in the last three months. I think she would like to blow me off totally.

Maria: Wow, that's not good. (Shifts through the case file) That kind of explains why you are behind in your reports. What do you think is going on?

Peg: Well I just don't think she really wants to accept that Anthony has problems. I think she took him in because he is her nephew, but really she has a full plate already. I know she is worried about keeping her job in the nursing home and her own kids have a ton of problems. That poor kid has been bounced from pillar to post and now he's with an aunt who isn't willing to work to help him.

Maria: Peg, that pretty much describes all of the cases you have on your caseload. Why is this one different?

Peg: Well I have had a pretty full caseload. Don't forget that you assigned me two new cases just last week and I am already up to capacity. I just can't go chasing after a family who doesn't want my help.

Maria: It sounds like you are pretty overwhelmed right now. With the Anderson case closing soon, you'll be down a case. So maybe you'll have more time to devote to the Grants.

Peg: Yeah, maybe, but I'm not sure that's going to help much. It's only a matter of time before another problem case comes down the pike and I'll be the one to get it. You know around here, if you're good at what you do, your reward is to get more work.

Maria: Well Peg, it is true that I depend on you as my senior therapist, but you bring up a good point and maybe I need to revisit how cases are assigned. I will think about that, but right now we need to get a game plan going for the Grants. Your reports are behind and given Anthony's history, I am really concerned about keeping this family together.

Peg: I have to tell you that Mrs. Grant really bugs me! She has this whole, 'I can save the world attitude.' She refuses to acknowledge that Anthony needs special education services. She thinks she can work with him at home to get him up to par. Do you know what she told me at our last meeting? "God doesn't give you more than you can handle." Can you believe that! She isn't handling anything in her life that well.

Maria: Well I know that Mrs. Grant is pretty involved in her church so I'm wondering why you find that comment so surprising?

Peg: You know, in the beginning I really thought we would click. We have a lot in common, but she is just plain naïve and I'm not sure I can work with someone who won't really look at the issues involved. When I took guardianship of my niece, I had to admit that just loving her was not going to save her. I needed to accept help. Every single thing I suggest to Mrs. Grant she rejects outright. What makes her think she can go it alone?

Maria: Well Peg, I'm wondering if this case is hitting a little too close to home. It seems like your expectations for Mrs. Grant are pretty high. Do you think you might be over identifying with her?

Peg: Maybe, I'm not sure. I guess I have to think about that.

Maria: Fair enough. In the meantime, let's put together a game plan on how to get Mrs. Grant engaged and working on the things she needs to do to help Anthony.

Peg: OK, but don't expect miracles!

Maria: (Laughs) Why not? Haven't I included "Miracle Worker" in your job description?

Activity: Reviewing and Discussing Cases

Instructions:
Please review *Peg* and respond to the following questions:

1. How did Peg's values and life experiences influence her ability to work with Mrs. Grant?

2. What techniques did Maria use to help Peg put some of the conflicts she was experiencing with Mrs. Grant into perspective?

3. Please refer to page 40 and review the three reasons that cases are reviewed and discussed in supervision. Please indicate what Maria accomplished with Peg regarding:

   Monitoring

   Supporting agency and professional processes

   Enhancing professional development

4. What else could Maria have done to provide effective supervision to Peg that she didn't do?

Important points to remember

- Retention focused supervision requires that supervisors know their own style, assess and adapt that style to their individual staff person's level of experience, unique personality and other diversity factors.

- Supervisory involvement will vary in terms of level of control and intensity, based on:
  - The staff person's level of experience (including life experience, time on the job, etc.)
  - The level of personal and professional stress the person is experiencing
  - The level of risk inherent in a particular situation

- An important role of supervisors is to assure that children and families served by the agency are receiving required and effective services. Cases are reviewed and discussed for several reasons:
  - Monitoring licensing, federal, state and contractor requirements
  - Helping staff use agency and professional processes in assessing and working with families and children
  - Helping staff become increasingly more professional and effective in their day-to-day work with children and families

2.7 Outcomes and Accountability

Setting goals and meeting outcomes are an important part of developing and maintaining a high morale and culture for retention.

From the supervisor's perspective, accountability is about meeting licensing and accreditation standards; meeting contractor requirements; adhering to the standards of ethics of the profession; providing quality services; and achieving timely case outcomes. Accountability is an important concept for supervisors to model and reinforce. Supervisors will need to take personal responsibility for the work performed by their staff. This means setting clear expectations and monitoring the achievements of their staff. People don't perform well when expectations are low. Accountability is everybody's business.

Some of the most critical human needs that affect staff commitment and performance are:

- Pride in one's work and employer
- Work that has meaning - staff want to be part of something that is doing good and accomplishing goals
- Clear goals and understanding of one's role in accomplishing goals
- A voice in shaping how the work is to be done
- Professional autonomy appropriate to one's experience and education
- Acknowledgement and recognition for individual and team achievements

In recent years, there has been more emphasis on achieving timely outcomes in child and family services. How an agency administers outcome requirements is critical to success. Agencies that are autocratic and demeaning to staff who do not or cannot reach outcomes because of lack of resources will have difficulty retaining staff. Following are some key points for supervisors to consider when seeking better and timelier outcomes for children and families. Supervisors need to:

- "Buy in" to agency commitments and contractor requirements pertaining to outcomes for children and/or families
- Make sure that their staff know what the expected outcomes are and acceptable timeframes for achieving them in their program
- Advocate for and provide staff with adequate resources to achieve outcomes
- Improve processes to reduce barriers, redundancy and wasted time in achieving outcomes
- Put processes in place to support, improve and measure individual and team performance
- Learn how to use the latest technologies to communicate with staff and monitor outcomes; e.g. collecting and analyzing data to guide decision making, make work assignments, set priorities and monitor achievements

Activity: How Do You Supervise for Outcomes?

Instructions: Please answer the following questions.

1. Please make a one page list of the expected outcomes, time lines for achieving them and source of requirements for your area of service?

2. How do you or will you communicate these requirements to your staff?

3. How do you or will you monitor and measure these requirements on an ongoing basis?

Setting Objectives for the Supervisory Partnership

An effective supervisory partnership is characterized by two aims. The first is to build and enhance the professional competencies of the individual child and family service staff person; and the second, which is equally important, is to enable the staff person to be effective in achieving appropriate outcomes for children and families. It is best that the supervisor put these two aims up front, so the staff person can consciously enter into the professional development aim of the relationship.

Setting S-M-A-R-T Performance Objectives

In starting a supervisory partnership and at regular intervals, it is appropriate to develop and review performance and professional growth objectives with each staff person. This is also a time when agency priorities and the staff person's priorities can be discussed. The supervisor needs to keep in mind that a big part of staff job satisfaction comes from having and meeting clear expectations.

The staff person may be progressing well and there may only be a few areas where he/she could use a bit of clarification. Perhaps he/she would like to get some direction on how to polish up a particular skill or there may be a misunderstanding of how an aspect of the job should be done. Or possibly, there are more fundamental areas to work on. Objectives need to be discussed and established for both:

- Job specific work to be done such as achieving outcomes and performing paperwork functions
- Personal skills/knowledge improvement i.e., areas that the supervisor and/or staff person see that require personal learning and growth

When writing objectives, be sure that they pass the **S-M-A-R-T** test. To test both the merit and completeness of the objectives ask the following five questions:

Specific – Are the objectives to be achieved specific/precise enough? Objectives must be developed to result in observable actions, behaviors or achievements linked to a rate, number, percentage or frequency. For example 'Answer the phone quickly' can be said to be a precise description of behavior, you can clearly see whether someone answers the phone or not, but there is no rate, number, percentage or frequency linked to it. However, if the objective is stated as 'Answer the phone within 3 rings' a rate has been added and the behavior is now much more specific.

Measurable – Are the objectives quantifiable in terms of quantity, quality and/or time? If the answer is yes, you can put into place a reliable system to measure progress towards the achievement of the objective.

Achievable – Are you attempting too much? Be realistic and insure that the objective can be achieved with a reasonable amount of effort. Do you have the resources to make the

objective happen (people, money, time, equipment, knowledge)? Is it possible to achieve the objective or is it based on fantasy?

Relevant– Does the objective address one of the major elements of the job? Does it relate to the strategic outcomes of the agency? Does it help the worker relate his/her work to the agency mission?

Time bound – Have time limits been set? State when the objective will be achieved (within a month; within the next six months, etc.).

A performance agreement can be used as an ongoing planning tool for all staff at all phases of development. It is not recommended for use as a corrective or punitive action nor is it meant to replace the agency's formal performance review system. This is a tool that can be used to set SMART short-term and/or incremental objectives, within the context of the overall performance plan.

Activity: Establishing Performance Agreements

Instructions:
Step 1: Using the *Sample Performance Agreement Form* that follows, think of one of your staff for whom you would like to help develop some performance objectives.

Step 2: Fill in each of the three key result areas and list two objectives for each area.

Remember to follow the **S-M-A-R-T** test when it comes to creating objectives that have merit and are complete.

Tool: Sample Performance Agreement Form [1]

Employee: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Supervisor: _____ Position: _____

Within the period _____ , the following will be accomplished:

A. Key result area: *Outcomes for clients*

Objectives:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

B. Key result area: *Paperwork and administration*

Objectives:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

C. Key result area: *Professional development*

Objectives:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

I understand that achieving these objectives is important to me and to the agency. Progress toward these objectives will be reviewed at regularly scheduled supervisory meetings.

Employee _____ Supervisor _____

[1] The Performance Agreement form has been adapted from *Keeping the People Who Keep You in Business* by L. Branham

Important points to remember

- People don't perform well when expectations are low. Accountability is everybody's business.

- From the supervisor's perspective, accountability is about meeting licensing and accreditation standards; meeting contractor requirements; adhering to the standards of ethics of the profession; providing quality services; and achieving timely case outcomes.

- How an agency administers outcome requirements is critical to success and impacts staff retention. It is important that the agency define, measure and reward achievement of outcomes.

- Developing and reviewing performance and professional growth objectives with each staff person is an important ongoing supervisory function. The supervisor needs to keep in mind that a big part of staff job satisfaction comes from knowing and meeting clear expectations.

- When developing performance objectives with staff, be sure that they pass the **S-M-A-R-T** test. That is: Are the objectives specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound?

2.8 Managing the Impact of Stress and Burnout

There are times when even experienced staff may need more active involvement from their supervisors. This may include times when staff are under a great deal of stress, injury or death of a client has occurred or when situations present a high level of risk for staff, the agency and/or the families and children served.

Having an understanding of the impact of stress on staff is important for retention focused supervisors who are working to build positive working relationships with staff. Everyone has his/her own window of tolerance in which stress can be accepted and coped with. Most people are fine as long as they can keep stress in their window of tolerance. It is important to remember that in times of stress the thinking process can become confused and distorted and that stress suppresses short-term memory.

Everyone is susceptible to the impact of stress and supervisors who are concerned about the emotional health of their staff need to be aware of ways to help staff recognize when too much stress turns into distress and help them manage it. The following table describes four categories of stress:

Four Categories of Stress [2]

Survival Stress	**Internally Generated Stress**
Occurs in cases where survival and/or health is threatened, when one is put under pressure, or when one experiences some unpleasant or challenging event.	Can come from anxious worrying about events beyond one's control, from a tense and hurried approach to life or from relationship problems caused by one's behavior. Some people generate internal stress as an addiction or for enjoyment.
Environmental and Job Stress	**Fatigue and Overwork**
Stress caused by one's living or working environment. Causes of stress include noise, crowding, pollution, untidiness, dirt or other distractions. Events from work can also cause stress.	This type of stress builds up over long time periods. It can occur when one tries to achieve too much in too little time without effective time management strategies or when there is prolonged overwork.

[2] Adapted from: "Mind Tools-How to Master Stress," www.psychwww.com

Stress vs. Distress

As illustrated in the *Four Categories of Stress* table, there are multiple sources of stress that people encounter. Child and family service staff, by the very nature of the jobs they do, are exposed to higher levels of job stress than individuals in other lines of work.

All stress is not bad. To 'stress' something is to put emphasis on it, or add pressure, force and/or strain. This can be a good thing when it is under control such as doing a reasonable amount of physical exercise, stepping up to a new mental challenge, taking on an interesting new project or cleaning out the closet. But these things do not happen in a vacuum. There is often so much going on at work and in the personal lives of staff and supervisors that sometimes a small bit of added stress results in extreme feelings or overreaction. Distress is when people are faced with too much stress, resulting in negative consequences. Excessive stress can have a negative impact on how a person functions and her/his relationships with others at work and at home. In child and family service, it is not unusual for supervisors and managers to ignore their own needs for time off and other stress relievers. Nobody wins when that happens.

How Distress Can Affect Performance

Clouds judgment	Promotes negative thinking	Narrows attention span
Disrupts ability to concentrate	Interferes with the quality of work	Effects quality of decision making
Reduces fine motor control	Reduces enjoyment of work	Damages self-confidence
Turns challenges into threats		

Burnout and Compassion Fatigue

Distress that is not dealt with can lead to burnout and/or compassion fatigue and staff who experience these conditions often leave the agency or the field. Supervisors cannot control the stressors outside of the work environment, but they can be aware of them while focusing on lessening the level of distress on the job.

Burnout is a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long term involvement in emotionally demanding situations. Some of the literature also refers to this condition as "compassion fatigue," especially when applied to people who are in care giving roles over a period of time. Burnout occurs when highly committed people lose interest and motivation. Typically it will occur in hard working, driven people, who become emotionally, psychologically or physically exhausted. Often burnout will manifest itself in a reduction in motivation, volume and quality of performance, or in dissatisfaction with or departure from the activity altogether.

Burnout and/or compassion fatigue are processes rather than a fixed condition and are characterized by:

- An erosion of idealism
- A void of achievement
- Emotional exhaustion

Staff who are at risk for burnout or compassion fatigue include those who:

- Find it difficult to say 'no' to additional commitments or responsibilities
- Experience intense and sustained pressure for prolonged periods of time
- Have high standards that make it difficult to delegate to others
- Try to achieve too much for too long
- Give too much emotional support for too long
- Experience a lack of control over commitments
- Believe incorrectly that they are accomplishing less
- Have a growing tendency to think negatively
- Experience a loss of a sense of purpose and energy
- Have an increasing detachment from relationships

Helping staff to avoid burnout and compassion fatigue is a job that retention focused supervisors will want to undertake. Supervisors need to avoid the lure of depending too heavily on the most competent staff by assigning them the most complicated cases. Respecting the limits of their mental energy is vital to helping them to preserve themselves. Knowing staff well enough to allow them to say no to commitments that they don't feel they can take on is also a skill of retention focused supervisors. This includes helping staff to guard against committing too much of their time to any one project.

It is the role of the retention focused supervisor to assist staff who are under a great deal of stress and/or in danger of burning-out by helping them to:

- Re-evaluate their goals and prioritize them
- Evaluate the demands placed on them, their ability to comfortably meet these demands and to determine how they fit with their goals
- Reduce commitments that are excessive
- Become less approachable and less sympathetic with people who demand too much emotional energy from them
- Involve others in a supportive role to help them deal with those who demand too much
- Learn stress management skills such as stress reducing activities
- Examine other areas in their life that are generating stress
- Utilize support of their friends and family
- Acknowledge that they have a right to pleasure and a right to relaxation

Post Traumatic Stress Disorders and Secondary Trauma[3]

Post traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) involve the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically traumatic event. These symptoms may include:

- Recurrent and intrusive recollections of the trauma
- Avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic event or numbering of general responsiveness
- Persistent symptoms of increased arousal

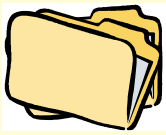
PTSD is usually the result of direct exposure to a traumatic event. Examples may include: physical assault, vandalism to property, verbal threats, stalking, child removal, witnessing physical assaults upon others.

Secondary trauma (which is also referred to in the literature as compassion fatigue, compassion stress, vicarious trauma or burnout) can occur as a result of a single event and is usually an "indirect" exposure to a traumatic event. This could include a child's death on one's caseload, serious injuries to children, rapes, physical abuse, extreme neglect, criticism by the press, threat of lawsuits. Secondary trauma is an element or contributing factor to burnout and many of the symptoms are the same as burnout symptoms. Child and family service staff are particularly vulnerable to secondary trauma because they are usually empathic, may have unresolved issues related to previous trauma, have insufficient recovery time and often their work involves children who experience extreme abuse and trauma. It is, therefore, very important that the agency understand the potential impact of secondary trauma on staff and be proactive in addressing situations. Some organizational responses can include:

- Develop and support a supervisory model that encourages staff to share difficult experiences, problem-solve and learn from them
- Encourage the use of grief counseling and peer support when traumatic events occur
- De-brief traumatic events and focus on lessons learned and future prevention
- Discourage excessive over time and habits of not taking sufficient time off
- Nurture the sense of mission, purpose and meaning that is part of the helping role, since it a crucial ingredient to the psychological well-being of the helper

[3] Information obtained from presentation by David Conrad, L.C.S.W., JFK Partners Department of Pediatrics, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center at the AdoptUsKids Summit, August 4, 2006, San Antonio, Texas

Case Study: Stressed Out!



Mike is one of Alice's most seasoned workers. He has always been willing to take on any task assigned and has worked with many of the new staff on the unit, showing them the ropes and helping them get oriented to the work. Alice really leaned on Mike in the last month or so to help make sure that everything was in order for licensing. She knows that she often "rewards" Mike's willingness to extend himself by assigning him the most difficult cases.

Recently, after a difficult pregnancy, Mike's wife gave birth to a baby with health issues. Despite Alice's urging, he has not taken off much time since the baby came home from the hospital. Alice has noticed that Mike has not been himself lately. He has not wanted to talk about the baby and seems to be more quiet than usual. Alice can relate to what Mike is feeling. When her son was born six years ago with disabilities she was devastated. While she managed to survive that awful time of adjustment, her marriage didn't.

Yesterday Alice overheard an exchange that Mike had with one of the new workers, where he snapped at her for not following through to arrange an appointment that he was to accompany her on. Today, Alice walked into Mike's office and overheard him talking to a new foster parent: "I can't hold your hand forever." Mike said, "Either you're going to step up to the plate and parent these kids or I need to find a family who will!"

Activity: Dealing with Staff Stress

Instructions: Please answer the following questions.

1. What do you believe to be the source(s) of Mike's stress?

2. What can you do in supervision to help Mike manage his stress and prevent burnout?

3. What can you commit to do to help your staff deal with stress that you are not currently doing?

Managing Personal Stress

A primary focus of this training program is to help supervisors be aware of and work with their staff to help relieve the predictable stressors of the job. This cannot be done when a supervisor's own resources are low or depleted. It is, therefore, critically important that supervisors understand and work to insure that they are also getting their own needs met. There is no better way to teach these skills than by modeling them. Some of the healthy and unhealthy coping styles are addressed in the table that follows.

Coping Styles for Handling Distress

Healthy	Unhealthy
Nurture collegial and cross-functional relationships	Isolate self from others in the agency, e.g. always eat alone
Take advantage of learning opportunities	Pass up training because you are too busy to attend
Make time to recognize staff's accomplishments and personal milestones	Ascribe to the theory that taking time to "affirm" and "play" detracts from the workplace
Set appropriate boundaries regarding accessibility to staff	Have an "open door" policy that doesn't allow some uninterrupted time each day
Set up and follow through on regularly scheduled supervision meetings with your supervisor	Skip regular supervisory meetings because you are too busy to take time away from your job
Create and maintain a balance between work and your personal life	Always come into work early and stay late to exemplify your work ethic for your staff
Balance workloads and fill vacant positions rapidly	Continue to carry vacant caseloads because you don't have time to recruit or interview

Activity: Developing a Personal Action Plan to Improve My Self-care Skills

Instructions:

1. In the personal development activities that follow, please develop a plan for your self-care.

2. Choose three self-care skills that are important to you. List these on the chart that follows. List some actions that you are prepared to commit to.

The Things I Will Do – To Improve My Self-Care Skills

The skills I want to improve	What I can do by next week

1. My first step will be to…
2. I will ask for help from _____ to do…
3. I will know that I am making progress by…
4. I will reward myself by….

Important points to remember

- Four categories of stress are: survival stress, environmental or job stress, internally generated stress and stress associated with fatigue and overwork.

- Distress that is not dealt with can lead to burnout and/or compassion fatigue and staff who experience these conditions often leave the agency or the field.

- Burnout and/or compassion fatigue are processes rather than a fixed condition and are characterized by: erosion of idealism, void of achievement and emotional exhaustion.

- Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is usually the result of direct exposure to a traumatic event. Examples may include: physical assault, vandalism to property, verbal threats, stalking, child removal, witnessing physical assaults upon others.

- Secondary trauma (which is also referred to in the literature as compassion fatigue, compassion stress, vicarious trauma or burnout) can occur as a result of a single event and is usually an "indirect" exposure to a traumatic event, e.g., the death of a child, exposure to accounts of severe abuse.

- Child and family service staff, by the very nature of the jobs they do, are exposed to higher levels of job stress than individuals in other lines of work.

- Supervisors who are concerned about the emotional health of their staff need to be aware of ways to help staff recognize when too much stress turns into distress and help them manage it.

- Excessive stress can have a negative impact on how a person functions and his/her relationships with others at work and at home. This can include inability to concentrate and impaired judgment.

- It is critically important that supervisors understand and work to insure that they are also getting their own needs met. There is no better way to teach stress management skills than by modeling them.

2.9 The Benefits of Retention Focused Supervision

What's In It for Me?

Alice has been thinking about her role as a supervisor. She remembers what a great foster care worker she was two short years ago, and she knows she uses many of the skills that made her a great worker in her role as a supervisor. However, she is aware that those skills alone are just not enough. She knows that to be a great supervisor she will have to expand her skills so that her staff can focus their time and energy on working with the children and families served by the agency. "I'm worried about retaining my staff," Alice thinks. "To really make a difference about the way my staff feel about the work they do, I'm going to have to make some changes." She begins to think about some of her role models from the past. In particular she remembers her supervisor from her field placement. "Boy, she was a great supervisor! She made me learn about myself by making time for regular supervisory visits; really listening to what I said and always managing to find something of value in it. She never failed to give me feedback and always sent me back to work with something to think about. That takes so much effort and time. Will it really be worth the effort?"

Looking at supervision through a retention lens requires developing very broad-based approaches and skills and a lot of commitment to improve one's practice of supervision. With all that is going on, it is hard to keep staff retention as a focus. So why bother trying? The best answers generally come from within. Any improvement in retention can make a supervisor's job/life easier. Simply put, the more there are experienced staff on the team, the higher quality of work and the fewer workloads the supervisor has to cover. With better retention, the supervisor will be able to perform his/her role more effectively and have greater personal satisfaction and support at work. Most importantly, a good retention rate leads to better services for children and families.

Retention focused supervision takes effort, but can provide benefits to staff, supervisors and the organizations in which they work. Some of the benefits are illustrated in the following chart.

The Benefits of Retention Focused Supervision

Staff will:	Organizations will:	Supervisors will:
Experience a sense of belonging and support	Enjoy a more stable staff and better track record for recruiting and retaining staff	Spend less time recruiting, hiring and training new staff
Reduce feelings of stress and burnout	Meet and improve outcomes for children and families	Experience growth and self-discovery
Learn new approaches with children and families	Improve overall productivity of the agency	Experience less crisis day-to-day
Improve self-confidence	Improve agency-wide communication	Develop leadership skills
Sense the agency mission and values “in the woodwork”	Increase loyalty to the agency	Develop more self-confidence in a leadership role
Experience support for professional and personal goal-setting	Increase positive perceptions of the agency in the community	Increase self-esteem
	Create a positive retention focused agency culture	Experience a new sense of competency in their roles
	Maintain a stable workforce to serve children and their families in their communities	See staff grow and develop personally and professionally

A Path with Heart

Being a retention focused supervisor is hard work, but incredibly satisfying as well. It brings meaning to the work and is a path with heart.

One quick and easy way to think about the qualities that are needed for retention focused supervision is the acronym "HEART."

Humility	Demonstrates putting the goals of the organization and the personal and professional growth needs of staff above personal desire for status or recognition.
Encouragement	Builds staff confidence, shows empathy and validates staff feelings and the good work they do
Acceptance	Acknowledges diversity, staff talents and uniqueness and tailors supervision to build on the individual's strengths and needs
Respect	Maintains clear boundaries and teaches and models mutual understanding and consideration
Trust	Creates a safe and secure environment that allows self-discovery and learning to take place

Figure 2.4 Monitor Your Heart Rate

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Appendix

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Tool: Supervisor's Staff Retention Competencies Inventory

A) Complete the inventory
Read each statement and score yourself on the extent/frequency to which you do each of these behaviors. Use the following rating scale:

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither agree nor disagree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree

Professional Development: I support the personal and career growth of my staff. If asked my staff would say that I…	Score
1. Take personal responsibility for retaining my staff	
2. Give priority to maintaining a schedule of regular, focused supervisory meetings	
3. Care about their values and help them connect their values with the agency's mission	
4. Work to build partnerships between myself and my staff	
5. Help staff cultivate and use self-awareness in their work with families, children and others	
6. Help staff set objectives for cases and personal development	
7. Encourage appropriate autonomy and decision making, based on an individual's experience and competence	
8. Support accountability and achieving outcomes for children and families by removing barriers and advocating for resources	
9. Help staff take responsibility for their own learning and development	
10. Encourage staff to take part in growth opportunities within the agency and professional education	
11. Model with staff the type of relationship that they need to develop in their work with children and families	
12. Link staff with others who can encourage their growth and job satisfaction	
Total score Professional Development	

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither agree nor disagree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree

Working with Differences: I respect and build on each individual's strengths and what makes each of them unique. If asked my staff would say that I…	
13. Model respect for differences and diversity	
14. Understand my assumptions about individual staff and work to value his/her unique differences	
15. Treat staff respectfully and preserve their dignity	
16. Understand how my personal learning style impacts my interaction with staff	
17. Understand staff's learning styles and employ techniques that are designed to aid in their learning	
18. Understand how my behavioral style impacts my interaction with staff	
19. Understand my staff's behavioral style and maintain flexibility in working with staff whose styles differ from my own	
20. Understand and manage my emotions and those of staff	
Total score Working with Differences	

Communication Skills: I model the relationship and communication skills that I want my staff to emulate with their clients. If asked my staff would say that I…	
21. Tailor my communication based on who I am, who my staff are and what the situation requires	
22. Listen carefully to what is being communicated and summarize what I hear	
23. Ask questions that draw out additional information	
24. Look for and evaluate nonverbal cues	
25. Identify and work with the feelings behind the words	
26. Keep an open mind and ask open questions	
27. Tell the truth and give thoughtful feedback that focuses on actions and not attitude	
28. Give feedback that works to instruct and assist staff rather than alienate them	
29. Ask clarifying questions to better understand staff emotions, attitudes and behaviors	
30. Challenge staff to rethink their blind spots, assumptions and values	
Total score Communication Skills	

1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither agree nor disagree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree

Culture and Environment: I understand that supervisors are cultural ambassadors for the agency. If asked staff would say that I…	***Score***
31. Place a high priority on staff retention and make it part of everyone's responsibility	
32. Maintain physical and emotional safety in the workplace and have safety policies and plans	
33. Develop and engage a multi-cultural workforce at all levels of the agency	
34. Care deeply about staff and their families and encourage balance between work and personal life and having fun in the workplace	
35. Support and encourage staff for their commitment and work on behalf of families and children and celebrate accomplishments	
36. Give staff appropriate autonomy to work in their own creative ways	
37. Promote a culture of continuous learning and development	
Total score Culture and Environment	

Performance and Outcomes: I want my staff to be successful on the job and earn the respect of others. If asked my staff would say that I…	***Score***
38. Teach and reinforce policies, procedures, and protocols relevant to the job	
39. Model and teach how to effectively manage the workload	
40. Help them make difficult decisions and set priorities	
41. Teach child and family assessment skills	
42. Teach report writing skills	
43. Teach how to access and use community resources	
44. Find ways for staff to do more of what they love to do	
45. Look for innovative and customized ways to reward and recognize talented people	
46. Differentially assign work to the staff who are most passionate about it	
47. Give credit and spotlight to staff	
48. Give continuous feedback on individual staff performance	
49. Conduct affirming and timely performance reviews	
50. Find creative ways to encourage teamwork to manage workloads	
Total score Performance and Outcomes	

B) Summarize your scores

1. Circle the number on the chart shown below that best approximates how you scored in each category.

	Supporting Staff Development	Working with Differences	Communication	Building Positive Culture	Support Performance and Outcomes
Strongly Agree	60	40	50	35	65
	54	36	45	31	58
Agree	48	32	40	28	52
	42	28	35	24	45
Neither agree nor disagree	36	24	30	21	39
	30	20	25	17	32
Disagree	24	16	20	14	26
	18	12	15	10	19
Strongly Disagree	12	8	10	7	13

2. Now draw a line through each of the five circles connecting them on the chart. How do your scores compare? Are they in balance or are some higher and some lower?

3. Look over your assessment scores and decide if there are any line items that you feel are especially significant. Circle those that you think are most important and want/need to work on.

Tool: The Things I Will Do – To Improve My Retention Competencies

The skills I want to improve	What I can do by next week

1. My first step will be to…
2. I will ask for help from _____ to do…
3. I will know that I am making progress by…
4. I will reward myself by….

Tool: Planning and Structuring Productive Supervisory Meetings

Before the meeting

☐ Develop a regular schedule of meetings with each staff person and strictly adhere to the time scheduled for the meeting

☐ Create a comfortable and confidential environment for holding meetings

☐ Resist any unnecessary interruptions including cleaning off your desk or table

☐ Prepare for the meeting
- Review the objectives you and your staff person established related to his/her performance
- Reflect on your last meeting with the staff person-what action items were established
- Did you follow through on actions you promised to do?
- Review case materials and cases that are to be discussed
- Reflect on the staff person's unique strengths and style
- Reflect on recurring themes from previous meetings and where the staff person might be stuck and need your help to progress
- Consider what meeting outcomes would benefit the agency, the staff person and you
- Be aware of your own work style, your current state of mind and emotions

During the meeting

☐ Be personable, even if it is not your customary style. Pay attention to what the staff person may be currently bringing to the session including his/her stress level, emotional state and readiness to tackle difficult issues

☐ Ask the staff person what would be a good outcome for him/her as a result of this meeting; share outcomes that you are seeking

☐ Develop an agenda for the meeting with the staff person, at the beginning of the meeting

☐ If you prepared the agenda previously, make sure you engage the staff person in making changes, as necessary

☐ Follow your agenda as appropriate, but stay flexible to address crises or important professional development issues that come up

☐ Use listening, clarifying questions, reflection, empathy, encouragement and other communication skills to engage and empower staff and to gain necessary information and give feedback

☐ Support staff in making difficult case decisions

☐ Challenge staff on blind spots and recurring themes, including relationship issues with you or others, as appropriate

☐ Provide feedback on case reviews, outcomes and agency requirements

☐ Review action items from last meeting

☐ Develop mutually agreed upon action items

☐ Plan the agenda and schedule next meeting

After the meeting

☐ Follow through on your assignments

☐ Give feedback to staff on progress, information and resources as needed

Tool: Sample Performance Agreement Form [4]

Employee: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Supervisor: _____ Position: _____

Within the period _____ , the following will be accomplished:

A. Key result area: *Outcomes for clients*

Objectives:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

B. Key result area: *Paperwork and administration*

Objectives:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

C. Key result area: *Professional development*

Objectives:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

I understand that achieving these objectives is important to me and to the agency. Progress toward these objectives will be reviewed at regularly scheduled supervisory meetings.

Employee _____ Supervisor _____

[4] The Performance Agreement form has been adapted from *Keeping the People Who Keep You in Business* by L. Branham

Tool: Point in Time Method of Calculating Staff Turnover

	Number of employees that left during this time period	÷	**Total number of employees at the beginning of this period ***	×	**100**	=	**Turnover % for this time period**
Total agency		÷		×	100	=	%
Foster care caseworkers		÷		×	100	=	%
Adoption caseworkers		÷		×	100	=	%
Other staff		÷		×	100	=	%
Other staff		÷		×	100	=	%

*** Note:** An alternate way of calculating turnover is to use the average number of employees during the period. Whichever way is used, just be sure to be consistent in the calculation when comparing results year to year.

About the Authors

John and Judith McKenzie, along with their colleague, Rosemary Jackson, are the principal authors, organizational consultants and trainers for the Michigan State University Workbook Series on *Staff Retention in Child and Family Services*. Their results-oriented work ethic, combined expertise, and successful work histories are ideally suited to assisting child and family service agencies in developing a culture for staff satisfaction and retention.

Judith was the CEO and President of Spaulding for Children for 22 years. Under her leadership, Spaulding grew from a small special needs adoption program to a renowned multi-service agency that has been the National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption continuously since 1985. In addition, she has several years experience administering public child and family service programs, including public assistance, protective services, foster care and adoption and child welfare agency licensing. Judith has provided training, keynote addresses, and has written extensively on child and family services, public and non-profit agency management and strategic planning. Judith received her MSW from the University of Michigan.

John has been a "hands on" manager and organizational consultant in business and industry for over 25 years. He has led a number of change initiatives and implemented many new projects throughout his career, winning six executive level awards for his contributions to General Motors, TRW and Unisys. John has experience and proven expertise in strategic planning, change management, teambuilding, project management, and implementation of workforce and quality processes. He has adapted these proven methods and materials from business to provide assistance to state child welfare programs and non-profit agencies. John received his BS in Industrial Engineering from the University of Maryland.

John and Judith have provided consultation and training in strategic planning and change management for over fifteen states' child welfare programs. In addition, they have written a series of five, *Answering the Call*, publications for AdoptUsKids on recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents, which have been published and distributed to over 60,000 individuals and agencies nationwide.

Rosemary Jackson is an accomplished trainer, consultant, program developer and clinician. Rosemary has developed curriculum for clinicians and parents to address the post placement needs of foster and adoptive families and she currently offers post adoption services to adult adoptees and families who have adopted internationally. She has also developed training materials on a variety of topics including grief and loss; workplace stress and burnout; secondary trauma and others that are germane to staff offering services to children and families. Her years combining service delivery and product development make her uniquely qualified to offer training and consultation services in child and family services.

Project Services

With a flexible design, agency leaders, supervisors and front-line staff will be able to benefit from using the curriculum in many ways. However, it is important for users to understand that the curriculum, at its best, is intended to facilitate cultural change within agencies to support staff retention and job satisfaction and improve agency outcomes. Therefore, states and agencies that make a commitment to obtain professional services to facilitate the implementation of the curriculum will experience better and more lasting results. The various ways the curriculum can be accessed and used are described below.

Self-study - Specific workbooks target the needs and interests of agency leaders, supervisors and front-line workers. Workbooks include learning activities, case studies and tools to enhance individual learning.

Workshops - Trainers and advisors are available to conduct workshops for leaders, program managers and/or supervisors. These workshops are tailored to the specific audience and (when available) will include use of media to present learning principles, engage participants in small group learning activities and demonstrate how the program can be used in the work setting.

Training of facilitators - Project staff will provide facilitator training for individuals or agency teams. Sessions will equip teams to facilitate learning groups in an agency and to use the curriculum in a combination of self-study and small group activities.

Multiple agency user group(s) - Project staff will provide ongoing training and support to a regular group of selected and trained agency facilitator teams, who will form a User's Group. The advantage to this model is that teams will be supported and encouraged to share their promising practices.

Single agency model - An experienced project faculty team will facilitate an agency's development plan over a mutually agreed upon period of time. Services will involve high-level administrative commitment and involvement. Agency assessments will be conducted and an agency-specific plan developed. Internal leadership team(s) will determine and facilitate changes. Staff will be involved at all levels of the agency.

Project staff will work with interested states and agencies to explore options for delivering services tailored to agency needs and available resources. Fees will be established based on scope of work, staff time, travel and material costs to deliver the services requested.

If you are interested in learning more about the availability of training and consultation services, contact:

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