



This author provides play therapy supervisors with some helpful guidelines specific to screening potential applicants for supervision and establishing successful working relationships with supervisees from the outset. *Clinical Editor Paris Goodyear-Brown, LCSW, RPT-S*

### Mining Report – February 2010

## **A-Z Mining Tips for Supervisors**

**By Trudy Post Sprunk, LMFT-S, LPC-S, RPT-S, EMDR-Certified**

Ongoing supervision is a practical, if not ethical, requirement of being a therapist. For this reason, potential supervisees may be seasoned clinicians seeking specific supervision in play therapy or beginning clinicians who need shepherding as they develop a whole range of clinical skills. The "goodness-of-fit" between the personalities, learning styles, communication patterns, etc. of the supervisor and the supervisee can make a significant difference in the overall experience for both parties. Since the needs of supervisees can vary so dramatically it is helpful to collect certain information from the applicant. This can be done with the use of a pen-and-paper screening tool prior to an interview or in a face-to-face process.

The information needed falls into five categories which include 1) ethics, 2) theoretical orientation, 3) personal qualities that affect the therapy, 4) what kind of supervision the person wants, and 5) the nature of the supervisory relationship. The first category allows for potential supervisees to talk about their personal and professional ethics. It can be useful to have the applicant describe one ethical dilemma that he/she has faced thus far in practice and how it was resolved. Moreover, it must become clear that the applicant takes ethical concerns seriously, knows and adheres to the ethical guidelines of his/her certifying or licensing body, and monitors the subject routinely.

The second category covers theoretical orientation. It is helpful to have a written description of his/her theoretical orientation(s) and how the person perceives its impact on the therapeutic process. The rigidity or flexibility of both the supervisor and the supervisee's treatment paradigms will significantly impact supervision and should be discussed prior to beginning the work. It is important that the supervisor learns how the supervisee practically applies his/her guiding practice in the therapeutic process.

In order to explore personality components that may effect a supervisee's clinical work and his/her response to supervision, it may be useful to explore the following areas: 1) how problems regarding professional boundaries have been addressed in the past, 2) what client issues the applicant feels unqualified or incapable of treating effectively, and 3) what aspects of the applicant's personal history positively and negatively affect his/her skills as a therapist. The responses to these questions serve as guides to learning about the applicant's ability to assess personal strengths and weaknesses.

It is critical to begin any new supervision process by agreeing upon the type of supervision that is to be provided. A good starting place is to learn about the kinds of supervision the applicant has previously experienced, what type of supervision has been most useful and what his/her current goals are for a

supervision process at this point. Once you have thoroughly discussed these issues, it is necessary to ask yourself if you can work effectively with this person.

A final area of consideration in establishing an effective working relationship with a new supervisee has to do with communication. Systems must be developed and agreed to regarding how either party can express concerns or dissatisfaction with the process. Moreover, in many supervisory relationships the supervisor is called upon to evaluate the supervisee. The criteria for this evaluation and the methods and frequency with which it will be done should be concretized at the outset. A supervisory relationship based on mutual respect, clear expectations and effective communication is on its way to being a satisfying professional relationship for both parties.

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Prior to the formal interview with a potential supervisee, I request that he/she complete a form that includes questions and statements such as:

- A. Describe the *type* and *quantity* of your work experience since earning your first graduate degree.
- B. Discuss the environment where you currently are employed.
- C. Explain your theoretical orientation.
- D. What assessment techniques or instruments do you currently use and what was the title of the graduate course (s) in which you learned these techniques?
- E. Describe aspects of your personal history, which positively and/or negatively affect your skills as a therapist.
- F. List current problems in your life which could limit your effectiveness as a psychotherapist.
- G. List client issues that you feel unqualified or incapable of treating effectively.
- H. Describe the amount and type of supervision, which you had in your degree program internship and practicum.
- I. Describe any past problems you have experienced in maintaining professional boundaries or in performing your role as a mental health provider
- J. What type of supervision has been the most helpful to you?
- K. What are your goals for this supervision experience?
- L. Have you even been sued regarding a professional matter?
- M. What kind of cultural/diversity issues have you faced?
- N. I understand that my supervisor has the right and responsibility to communicate with appropriate state licensing board(s) and/or my employer if he/she believes there may be a risk to client safety. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
- O. I am aware that my supervisor will constantly be evaluating my skill level and will notify me if a rehabilitation plan is required. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
- P. I agree to contact my supervisor regarding client emergencies. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
- Q. I agree to comply with HIPAA and my employer requirements regarding record keeping. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
- R. I am aware that my supervisor may be requested to provide either positive or negative information regarding my attitude, timeliness, record keeping, therapy skills, ability to encourage, listen, and support peers, attendance, etc. to potential employers, educational institutions, or licensing boards, etc. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
- S. Describe your long term goals as a therapist.
- T. Do you understand the legal issues of confidentiality and privileged communication, diagnoses, duty to warn/report, and vicarious liability? Yes: \_\_\_ No: \_\_\_
- U. Name the professional mental health organizations to which you belong: \_\_\_\_\_
- V. Are you aware that email is not a secure form of communication; thus, confidentiality is at risk? Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
- W. Have you taken at least one course in ethics and have you studied and understand APTs recommended professional guidelines and agree to abide by them. Yes: \_\_\_ No: \_\_\_
- X. What is your greatest learning curve at this time?
- Y. How do people change?
- Z. If you are a licensed mental health professional and agree to abide by the code of ethics of your state licensing board. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_