Supervising Peer Support Professionals: Holding True to the Values that Matter

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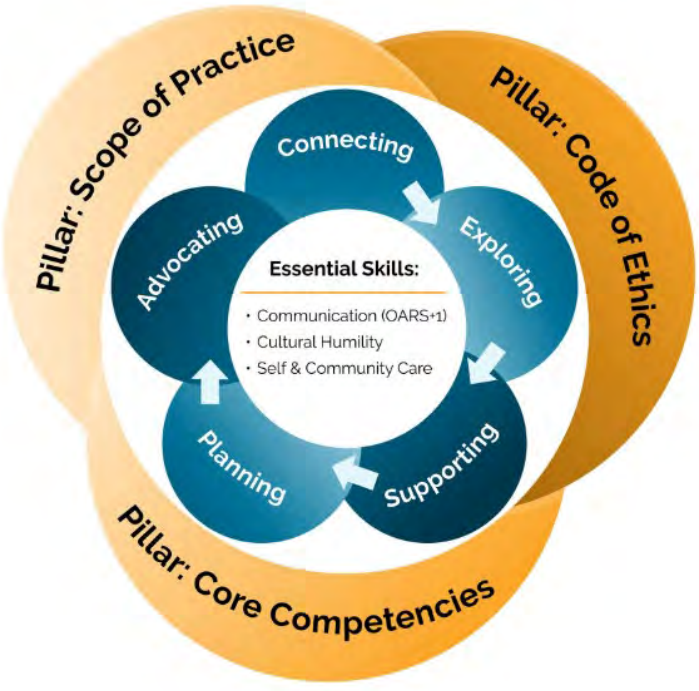
Thank you to those who participated in the webinar. What follows are notes from the presentation with results of polls, word cloud, and reproduced chat. In an opening poll, 157 respondents identified their work as either counselor/social worker/therapist (n = 95, 61%), supervisor (n = 25, 16%), other professional (n = 19, 12%), leader/administrator (n = 14, 9%), or peer support professional (n = 4, 3%).

Peer support overview



Pillars: scope of practice, code of ethics, core competencies

Processes: connecting, exploring, supporting, planning, advocating

Essential Skills: communication, cultural humility, self & community care

Within each process, many tasks of peer support are described with corresponding tools to guide the practice.

- Most counties have at least one certified peer specialist.
- There are currently 1,555 certified peer or parent peer specialists in Wisconsin.

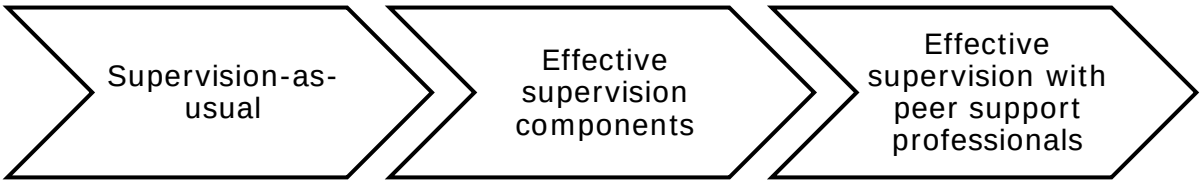
Supervision Overview

In your experience with supervision (receiving/providing), what value matters most? Results of word cloud showed **Trust**, **Compassion**, **Understanding**, and **Being heard/Listening** were the top values that matter most in supervision.

As part of a DHS-commissioned review of the clinical supervision literature (DHS, 2024; Prock et al., 2020), seven fundamentals of effective supervision were identified:

1. Supervisor professional development
2. Supervisory alliance
3. Focusing
4. Administrative tasks
5. Foster professional development
6. Evaluation
7. Planning

Based on these fundamentals, we considered three descriptions of supervision:



Supervision-as-usual (Schriger et al., 2021)

Fundamentals	Description
1. Supervisor professional development	Attend 1-2 annual conferences
2. Supervisory alliance	Little to no purposeful engagement; tendency toward chat Hierarchical relationship
3. Focusing	Supervisor sets the agenda Disproportionate attention to administrative tasks
4. Administrative tasks	Ensure compliance to administrative rules, focus on technical issues, attention to internal procedures, review documentation
5. Foster professional development	Focus of learning is administrative, technical, procedural aspects of the work Consultation is crisis driven with fact gathering and supervisor problem-solving; supervisor is expert
6. Evaluation	Annual performance review
7. Planning	Generic goals and plan for professional development

Effective supervision (Milne et al., 2011; Prock et al., 2020)

Fundamentals	Components
1. Supervisor professional development	Initial training followed by ongoing co-learning Develop cultural humility, hone professional ethics
2. Supervisory alliance	Engagement is purposeful and starts every session Way of being (collaborative, accepting, support autonomy) with skillful communication (emphasis on reflective listening) Relationship minimizes power differential
3. Focusing	Collaborative agenda setting; balance administrative tasks with fostering professional development
4. Administrative tasks	Similar to supervision-as-usual (but less emphasis)
5. Foster professional development	Explore readiness for learning, use active learning methods Consultation with trauma sensitivity Shared expertise to develop cultural humility and professional ethics
6. Evaluation	Ongoing with multiple methods (including direct observation of practice)
7. Planning	Ongoing with tailored goals and detailed plans for professional development

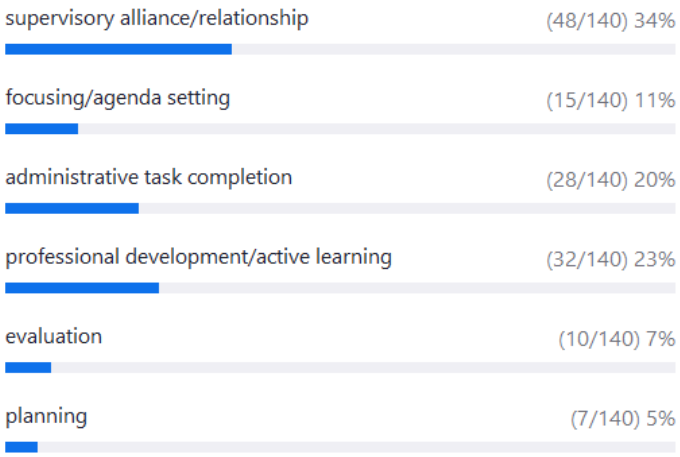
Following descriptions of supervision-as-usual and effective supervision components, a series of polls were conducted.

Experiences with supervision

Poll | 3 questions | 141 of 209 (67%) participated

1. Which fundamental do you receive/provider the MOST in supervision?
(Single choice)

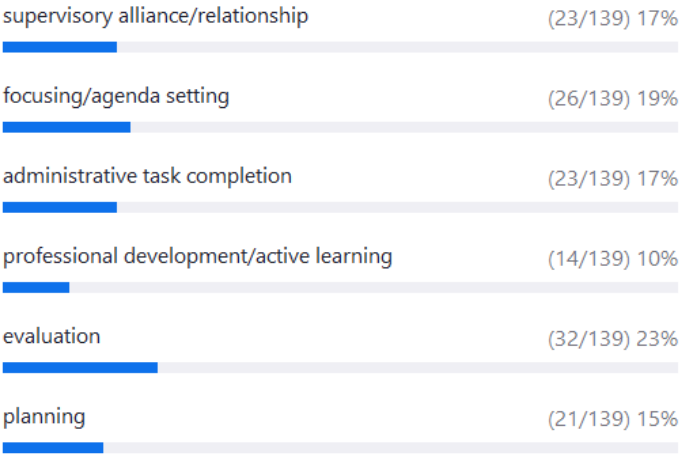
140/141 (99%) answered



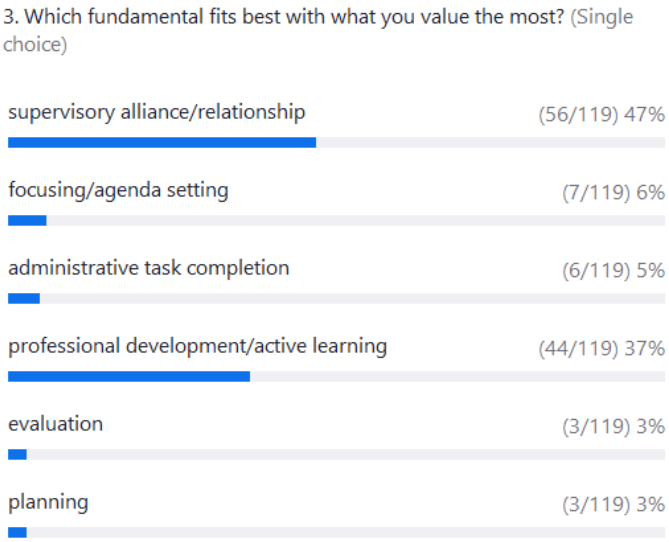
Results showed the **most** frequently experienced fundamental of supervision was the supervisory alliance (34%).

2. Which fundamental do you receive/provider the LEAST in supervision?
(Single choice)

139/141 (98%) answered



Results showed the **least** frequently experienced fundamental of supervision was evaluation (23%).



Respondents indicated that the supervisory alliance (47%) and professional development (37%) fit best with their most important values.

We took the seven fundamentals of effective supervision and considered the application with peer support professionals (NAPS, 2019; SAMHSA, 2023).

Fundamentals	Components
1. Supervisor professional development	• Complete initial training to understand peer support services, then continue learning to deepen understandings • Continual examination of attitudes, biases, and assumptions about peer support • Continual co-learning with/from peer support professional expertise (see DHS, 2023) • Model development of cultural humility • Develop ethical understandings of values-based peer services within scope of practice
2. Supervisory alliance	• Purposeful engagement to connect is viewed as essential to start all meetings • Highly collaborative, accepting, mutual way of being provides parallel process to peer support services • Skillful communication with emphasis on reflective listening ensures understanding peer support professional experiences, perspectives, and ideas • Attention to power dynamics means balancing authority with relational/psychological safety

3. Focusing	• Collaborative agenda setting • Full input into agenda from peer support professional fosters empowerment and supports autonomy • Agenda balances administrative tasks and peer support professional growth and development • Maintaining focus maximizes precious supervision time
4. Administrative tasks	• Program compliance discussions include attention to peer support scope of practice, competencies, and ethics (pillars of peer support services) • Discussing organizational policies/procedures include role clarity and clear expectations • Documentation review with attention to recovery-oriented, person-first language (co-learning) • Identify supports/resources for continued learning of technical, administrative aspects of the job (advocacy)
5. Foster professional development	• Valuing professional development is consistent with peer support professional embrace of change and growth as person-in-recovery • Strengths-based consultation on challenging interactions • Active co-learning and reflective practice are good fit approaches on topics of professional ethics, cultural humility, trauma-informed care • Attention to self and community care to address “role strain” (SAMHSA, 2023, p. 136)
6. Evaluation	• Direct observation of practice with simple structure (e.g., communication skills observer sheet) • Consider use of emerging standardized evaluation (e.g., Chinman et al., 2016) • Use of self-assessment is a good fit approach • Two-way, strengths-based feedback
7. Planning	• Planning for ongoing professional development is a top priority among peer support professionals (DHS, 2023, p. 27). • Planning is collaborative and supports autonomy. • Goals are tailored with an eye for career/leadership development. • Specific resources are identified with attention to access.

Organizational context matters

Supervision does not occur independently of the organizational context in which supervision occurs. There are several ingredients of organizations that successfully deliver peer support services and each either directly or indirectly supports effective supervision:

- **Recovery-oriented mission** (Gagne et al., 2018). When provider staff believe recovery is possible and recovery values are embedded in everyday services and supervision, these organizations tend to be more successful with implementing peer support services.

- **Preparing staff.** Without intentional, thoughtful preparation, provider staff are likely to misunderstand what peer support services are all about. One study looked at "getting the staff to understand it" (Bochicchio et al., 2023). Why is understanding so important? Well, misunderstanding can lead to insensitive, disrespectful, or even microaggressions toward peer support professionals (Firmin et al., 2019) which are harmful and undermine the implementation of peer support service.

- **Planning for integration** means figuring out how the peer support professional can be integrated into teaming and routine operations (Bochicchio et al., 2023; Gillard et al., 2013).

- **Role clarity.** From HR job description to supervisor understandings and clinical team operations, role clarity is a predictor of peer support professional job satisfaction (Edwards & Solomon, 2023).

- **HR policies and procedures.** Advocate for equitable wages, inclusive hiring policies/procedures, provide guidance on reasonable accommodations (Gagne et al., 2018).

- **Being a learning organization** (Beidas & Wiltsey Stirman, 2021). As Marguerit mentioned, a recent statewide survey of the Wisconsin peer workforce showed that the number one employer support identified was "more continuing education" (DHS, 2023, p. 27). Robust supervision of peer support professionals combined with ongoing learning opportunities across the organization could provide such support (Bochicchio et al., 2023).

To wrap up the webinar, respondents reassessed familiarity with the work of peer support professionals. Based on a 1-5 scale (1 = not at all familiar, 2 = a little familiar, 3 = somewhat familiar, 4 = very familiar, 5 = deeply familiar), results showed a statistically significant increase in familiarity from poll at the start of webinar (number of respondents = 154, average = **3.20**) to poll at the end of webinar (number of respondents = 134, average = **3.53**).

Closing activity

In chat, participants noted one thing that was either interesting, surprising, exciting, or motivating. Responses reproduced from chat:

- The importance of having engaged, non-traditional supervision was something I was most drawn to/impressed by. I intend to look further into two-way evaluations.
- It is promising to know that even entry level learning about what CPSs do results in benefits for CPSs' experiences in the workplace
- I learn something daily and this was amazing!
- excited me to be more prepared for supervision
- idea of supervision in a more interactive process
- To offer more professional development in clinical supervision; I never realized that discrepancy.
- I love that you highlighted the opportunity for learning on the part of the supervisor!
- The role of peer support
- Really helpful information! Thank you so much for sharing this and providing resources!
- Appreciate the connectedness discussed & importance of such
- motivated to have more co-learning.
- thanks you guys the time went really fast with your presentation method but was also fruitful in getting out the message and causing reflection--appreciate it
- motivated to have more co-learning
- Building an alliance
- Being more mindful of the level of clinical practices vs. peer support practices.
- I think for me the surprising thing is the high emphasis on PFL still since some subcommunities strongly prefer IFL.
- I liked the ongoing learning from each other, collaboration, and creating/ implementing a meeting agenda
- co-learning
- Very interesting. I learned about peer support specialists which I didn’t know existed.
- the importance of staff being onboard.

- Just understanding more about this is awesome!
- I appreciated learning more about this topic, as we recently added peer support to our staff.
- concept of supervisory alliance
- The presentation affirmed for me the need for adequate supervision for peer supporters!
- My peer support staff appears to be the other half of the case management services we strive to provide. Sometimes peer support is informed of hidden statues that CMs are not immediately aware of.
- growth oriented on all persons' parts with ethics
- Would love to see a webinar on how supervisors can support peer specialist when peers are retraumatized or triggered
- The power Marguerit loves is understood by Scott as a love of power, at this I do not mean role power but mutuality

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