

NRCOI FACT SHEET

Building a Model and Framework for Child Welfare Supervision

A Call to Action for Agency Leadership

Both child welfare professionals and the literature identify the importance of the supervisory role in achieving desired service and organizational outcomes. Child welfare supervisors have been pivotal in identifying the need for organizational and practice change as well as evaluating progress toward positive outcomes for children, youth and families. Supervisors interact with a number of constituent groups: clients served by the agency; line staff assigned to the supervisor; the professional community and organizations and individuals providing contracted services; agency administrators and managers, and those financial and legal bodies under whose auspices the agency functions; and resource parents and child care providers. They are, thus, key translators of the organization's mission, vision, values and practice both within the agency and with external partners and stakeholders.

In order to provide agency leadership with up-to-date information, the Children's Bureau asked the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and

Permanency Planning and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement to examine the responsibilities and needs of supervisory staff and develop an organizational framework to support effective child welfare supervision. The resulting document, *Building a Model and Framework for Child Welfare Supervision*, is intended to serve as a roadmap for agency leadership as they think through ways to build and sustain effective child welfare supervision in their agencies. It is a state of the art compendium, including an emerging model of supervision in child welfare, and ideas and practices that,

My supervisor is a great support. I have worked with the same manager since I've been here. I'm still here at this agency because of her. I want to give the same kind of support to my own workers. – Supervisor

if implemented by agency leadership, can radically improve the ability of supervisors and the agencies that employ them to serve the needs of children and families in their cities, States and Tribes.

As agency leaders design and implement an agency model for supervision and a system to support their supervisors, they will want to use and even expand the variety of proven tools, strategies, and approaches suggested in this report. The Children's Bureau Training and Technical Assistance Network is available to work with State and Tribal administrators as they create and implement a customized plan to enhance their child welfare supervisory practice and thus improve organizational and child, youth and family outcomes. If you have questions on this report or want to discuss how your agency might use some of the concepts and tools presented in the report, please feel free to contact the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement at www.nrcoi.org or the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at www.nrcfcppp.org.

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This report presents the findings from an extensive review of the most recent literature combined with interviews of experts in the field of child welfare, currently practicing child welfare administrators, supervisors, frontline practitioners, and trainers. The report introduces seven elements of an emerging model of supervision in child welfare. These elements include:

- an articulated, written description of the organization's practice philosophy and approach;
- an identification of the functions and specific job responsibilities of child welfare supervisors;

- a recognition of the centrality of building and maintaining relationships with supervisees and others to carrying out supervisory responsibilities effectively;
- mandated explicit, manageable standards for caseload size and for supervisor-supervisee ratios;
- a definition of expectations with regard to the frequency and format for supervision of frontline practitioners;
- clarified expectations for on-going evaluation of frontline practitioners; and
- support for supervisors in their roles as unit leaders and change agents.

The report also presents an integrated organizational framework that empowers child welfare supervisors to effectively carry out their administrative, educational, and supportive functions. The components of that framework are:

- an organizational culture that values and demonstrates support for the vital role supervisors play in ensuring positive outcomes for children, youth and families;
- a model of supervisory practice that reflects how the organization views the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of supervisors and includes up-to-date, written job descriptions;
- recruitment and retention of individuals who are a "good fit" as frontline practitioners and supervisors; and
- a continuum of professional development opportunities for new and experienced supervisors that includes initial and ongoing training, peer support, mentors, and clinical consultation.

We recently lost a supervisor. Some feel she was burning out and that's why she made an error she normally would not have made. When you don't pay attention to stress and burnout, workers and supervisors can make mistakes. It really affects how they are doing their job, the energy they have, and how they make decisions. – Supervisor



National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement
Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine
PO Box 9300, 34 Bedford Street, Portland, ME 04104-9300
Tel: 207-780-5810 • Toll Free: 1-800-HELP KID (435-7543) • e-mail: helpkids@usm.maine.edu

www.nrcoi.org

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