



Supervisors' Strategic Plan



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Director's note:

Thank you for your interest in learning more about Alaska's work to enhance child welfare supervision. Please note that this is a multi-year plan and one that is in a continual state of progress. Since this is the first year, many of the timelines for completion or tasks are still as of yet incomplete. Our goal is to update this publication quarterly to reflect the progress and efforts continuing. Please check back routinely for an updated version.

Sincerely,
Christy Lawton
Acting Director, Office of Children's Services



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Narrative Introduction

Alaska participated in their second Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) in September 2008, a process in which the Federal government in partnership with the States assess how each State is doing in achieving core outcomes for children and families who come into the child protection system. As part of that process, a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) was developed to address the areas of needed improvement identified in the CFSR. The Alaska PIP incorporates three primary strategies:

- Practice Model Integration and Implementation
- Accountability and Supervision
- Strengthening Systems Capacity

Framework

The State Office and Regional leadership of the Office of Children’s Services (OCS) recognizes that supervisors are central to high quality child welfare practice. “Effective supervision entails both practice expertise as well as leadership skills. The development of both areas is necessary for the supervisor or manager to be the conduit toward better outcomes...for families.” (2009 PIP) OCS has implemented a Supervisors’ training through the Family & Youth Services Training Academy (FYSTA) to assist with skill development and by early 2010 all supervisors will have completed this training. A strategic plan for supervision will build upon these efforts and allow supervisors an active part in defining and designing the supports they need to be successful.

Rationale for Focusing on Child Welfare Supervision

The field of public child welfare increasingly is focusing on supervision as a strategy for improving practice and outcomes. Across the United States, it is clear that supervisors are the most stable element of the child welfare system, they are the keepers of any agency’s culture, and to introduce and achieve systemic change, their involvement and support is crucial. These conclusions are reinforced by the fact that, following the first round of the CFSR, over 20 states built improving child welfare supervision as a key strategy in their Program Improvement Plans.

This view of the value of child welfare supervision is supported by research. Supervision has been empirically linked to organizational, worker and client outcomes — particularly staff recruitment and retention. Appendix B contains excerpts from just a few of the relevant literature reviews.





Structure for Developing a Plan

Recognizing the importance of supervisors, OCS sought a way to improve overall supervision through enhancing support to this staff. A statewide management meeting was held in October 2009. In attendance were state office personnel, regional managers, staff managers and supervisors from every office in the state. In addition, university training partners attended. Part of the agenda included a facilitated discussion among supervisors and staff managers to introduce the idea of developing a strategic plan for supervision and explore the current culture of supervision in the state.

Following this meeting a work group was developed to create a strategic plan for supervision that would enhance supervisory development. All staff managers and supervisors were invited to volunteer for the work group following the statewide management meeting held in October. This was done with the understanding that a selection process would occur to guarantee the group represented all regions, office sizes and programs of the agency. All supervisors and staff managers understood the work group would be charged with soliciting input from their peers as the process progressed.

It was later decided that staff managers would not participate in the work group. Although not included in the work group, the input from staff managers at the statewide management meeting was used to help define the current culture.

The resultant Supervision Work Group membership is comprised of:

18 Supervisors

5 State Office staff including:

- Child Protection Administrator
- Program Administrator
- Quality Assurance Manager
- ORCA Manager

2 staff from Family & Youth Services Training Academy (FYSTA):

- Director
- Training Staff

The Supervision Work Group is supported through technical assistance provided by the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI)¹ and the National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology (NRC-CWDT)¹. Anna Stone (NRCOI) and Joe Murray (NRC-CWDT) facilitated the development process.

¹A service of the Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.





Basis of Plan

As noted above the concept of developing a strategic plan for enhancing supervision in Alaska was introduced at a statewide management meeting held in October 2009. This meeting included a brief overview of the literature from a national perspective and an explanation of the procedure that would be employed in the development of the OCS Child Protection Supervision Strategic Plan. Questions regarding the course of action and the commitment from agency leadership were addressed by the facilitators and members of the Director's senior leadership team.

Following this introduction, state office staff and regional managers left the room. The remaining portion of the day, the supervisors and staff managers explored the purpose and current culture and structure of supervision in Alaska.

Additionally, the group discussed a time and activities study and explored their interest in participating in that study. Although the on-going work group would be limited, there was discussion of extending an invitation to all supervisors and staff managers to participate in the time and activities study. A conference call/webinar could be scheduled to share the results with everyone who participated.

The information that follows is a summation of the discussion held with all staff managers and supervisors.

The Purpose of Supervision

Staff Development and Support:

Exploration of the current culture of supervision started with the group's perception of the expectations of supervisors and the group's idea of the purpose of supervision. By a large margin the group identified staff development, coaching and support as the primary purpose for supervision. The list of expectations clearly reflected this; examples include providing guidance to workers through such mechanisms as regular case conferences and acting as a "buffer" between workers and upper management when decisions are questioned.

Other expectations in this category included teaching, supporting and building strengths within the supervisor's unit, as well as modeling leadership, good clinical skills, and the ability to maintain calm in a crisis. The group recognized the need to be expert in all types of supervision. It was noted that this was expected even though there may be an absence of adequate training.

Some expectations related to intra-agency activities such as the need to "referee" among employee differences and office issues such as security, administrative and fiscal issues. Particularly in smaller offices, many expectations focused on meeting basic, tangible needs of employees.





Compliance with Policy and Standards:

Compliance with policy and standards surfaced as an important purpose with the group noting expectations such as meeting standards set by the agency and compliance to policy. The group identified emphasis on data input and meeting timelines as issues that were stressed in their role.

Toward this end, supervisors are expected to fill in for workers either short term, as in the case of illness, or long term when a worker leaves and a replacement is being hired and trained. When supervisors have primary responsibility for cases, supports — such as supervision of the supervisor’s casework and approval of case decisions — are inadequate.

Community Relations:

Another important purpose of supervision relates to the community, including: community education such as mandatory reporter training, resource family training, etc. The group expressed that supervisors are expected to resolve complaints with community stakeholders and individual citizens. In general, they represent the agency to the community in a positive and professional manner.

Change Management:

The staff managers and supervisors felt there was a strong expectation to positively present and actively promote changes in policy and practice as prescribed by the agency, even if they were given little opportunity to understand the rationale for the change or to develop the skills necessary to implement the practice. The group expressed the expectation that they would not only hold meetings — with their staff and often the community — to provide information about changes but to strategically support a specific change or the agency’s vision.

Supervisors may also be expected to provide expert witness testimony in court.

Personal Impact:

Supervisors promote self-care (both their own and that of their workers) to mitigate burn-out and maintain a positive work environment.

Finally, there was a cluster of expectations that represent elements that cross all purposes. These perceptions include a feeling that the personal life of a supervisor is expendable if necessary to get the job done. The group felt this was often expected without any sort of compensation, as noted in the extra hours worked by supervisors with no compensation. For some supervisors they are expected to provide high quality supervision to staff in large geographic areas where regular face to face contact is not possible. Some in the group expressed concerns for retribution if they said no to assignments or voiced concern for a policy or practice.





The Current Culture of Supervision

Value of Supervision

The next part of the discussion focused on how the group members perceived their value by others in the agency. The group was broken into smaller subgroups for this activity. Each small group had an opportunity to add to a list of indicators as to whether or not they were valued by:

1. People who reported to the supervisor or staff manager
2. Peers of the supervisor or staff manager
3. People who supervised the supervisor or staff manager
4. Agency leadership

Group members essentially felt appreciated and valued by their staff and their peers. With regard to staff, indicators included seeking direction, sharing personal highs and lows, prompt attendance for conferences and active participation in discussions with clearly no concerns about repercussions for disagreement. Although there were fewer indications of not being valued by their staff, some group members noted issues with staff covering up mistakes, and “jumping the chain of command.”

In relation to their peers, communication surfaced as a theme to illustrate both value and lack of value. Discussion among supervisors that led to resolving issues, showing respect for each other’s work, sharing ideas, and support for each other all reflected a feeling of value. Conversely, when peers didn’t seek out or listen to opinions of group members they expressed feeling under-appreciated. For some of the “specialty” supervisors such as licensing and adoption, their exclusion from supervisor meetings led to a feeling of lesser value.

The subgroups also reflected on the issue of value shown by their own supervisors and state office. Generally they were less positive about these levels of leadership. Once again communication and inclusion formed the foundation for most comments. Supervisors and staff managers felt more valued when their opinions were sought and when they perceived their supervisors and state office personnel actually considered the ideas presented.

Examples of opinions being sought included the opportunity for regular conferences with their supervisor, and inclusion in statewide meetings such as the one during which this discussion took place. Although fully aware of the time and distance challenges facing the agency group members felt there was an overreliance on e-mail for communication. While e-mail can provide information, this method of communication does not necessarily impart understanding.





They also mentioned the chance to have input on new policy during development and implementation. The group members were clear that they understood their ideas may not always be adopted and they expressed the desire to have enough feedback to understand why decisions were made. Without this understanding of why decisions were made, not only did they feel less appreciated but they had more trouble supporting decisions with their staff.

Supervisors and staff managers felt they were not encouraged to be honest if they disagreed with the direction of their immediate superior or state office. Having more opportunity to present their point of view, as the people most directly involved with practice, and more thoroughly understand why decisions were made would help them feel more appreciated as professionals. Group members also added that they would welcome genuine positive reinforcement when they have done a good job and more open support when their actions, or those of their staff, were questioned. They perceive the initial response from State Office as often being judgmental — i.e., there's been a mistake made — which then requires extensive response.

Supports for Supervision

The group was next asked to consider what supports are currently available to supervisors and staff managers. Of the list that was generated, there were many offered that are available statewide. Others appeared to be the practice of specific supervisors or regions.

There was widespread agreement that ORCA and some of the data generated was very helpful to those in supervision roles although additional training on the system would enhance appropriate use of the system (with fewer problems generated) and improve the data. The Department of Administration Supervisor Academy and the FYSTA Supervisor Academy are seen as important sources of support, although some members would like to see more encouragement to attend these and other training that may be available. Peer-to-peer case reviews were seen as supportive as were other opportunities to seek peer consultation and network with colleagues.

E-mail is used frequently to disseminate information. Group members found the regular practice tips that are included in the "Question of the Week" to be helpful. Although some supervisors didn't meet as regularly with their superiors for structured conferences, those that did felt these were a good source of support.

Some members appreciated opportunities to use non-traditional office practices like flexible schedules and the ability to work from home on occasions; however, such opportunities are not wide-spread. The group as a whole seemed very appreciative of the Personnel Department and the assistance they received with human resource issues. They also appreciated the ability — albeit limited — to receive clinical supervision from FYSTA for licensure.





Vision for Supervision

Finally the group was asked to define their vision of supervision. There was little time left during the statewide meeting of all supervisors and staff managers so only a few thoughts were generated during this discussion. During the first meeting of the Supervision Strategic Plan Work Group, the discussion was continued and elicited the elements delineated in Appendix A. Some of the responses reflect personnel issues from recruitment and hiring to training. Others identify good clinical skills while still others envision a strong working relationship with leadership in the agency and accountability.

The Supervision Strategic Plan Work Group condensed these elements into two statements of Vision for Child Protection Supervision. Both require a strong, committed workforce led by high quality supervisors at every level. Standards are set high, with an expectation that all staff will be held accountable for achieving positive outcomes for children and families. The two statements of Vision for Child Protection Supervision are:

The Guiding Principles of the Practice Model will be reflected in interactions among staff at all levels of the agency as well as with families and community.

and

Practice is consistent statewide and supports integration and implementation of the Practice Model.



Child Protection Supervision Strategic Plan

Area #1: Child Protection Supervisor Recruitment, Training and Professional Development

Goals and Action Steps	Tasks to Complete Action Step	Intended Effects of Action Step / Measurement	Persons/Group Responsible & Completion Date for Action Step
<p>Goal #1: Supervisors are selected and retained based on demonstration of competencies grounded in the Practice Model Guiding Principles in every aspect of their work with families and within the Agency and community. A1</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Establish supervisor position description that integrates the desired competencies. 2) Develop competency-based performance evaluations. 3) Integrate the Practice Model in recruiting / developing new supervisors. 4) Integrate the Practice Model in selecting supervisors. 5) Assure that performance issues with supervisors are addressed by staff managers across the state utilizing a common approach. (consistent with approach to workers) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Establish supervisor position description that integrates the desired competencies <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1a) Create work group of frontline supervisors, staff managers, FYSTA, senior leadership, agency HR and/or State HR to complete all tasks under this Action Step. 1b) Develop avenues for worker input during development of all materials. 1c) Research position descriptions from other states and create position description(s) that speaks to the unique needs of supervision in Alaska. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Include roles and responsibilities relative to the community</i> 1d) Develop core competencies (i.e., knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities or KSAs) for each supervisor position description. 2) Develop competency-based performance evaluations. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2a) Identify how the current performance evaluation form allows for exploration of position-specific knowledge, skills and abilities, competencies and aspects of mutual respect and accountability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>see examples from South Dakota, Maine</i> 2b) If necessary, revise the current performance evaluation form to support exploration and capture of knowledge, skills and abilities and aspects of mutual respect and accountability. 2c) Devise and distribute instructions for use which promote review of knowledge, skills and abilities and aspects of mutual respect and accountability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Consider use of 360 degree evaluation process (i.e., incorporate input/feedback from supervisees, peers, supervisors and other people with which the employee has a professional relationship)</i> 2d) Complete professional development plans in conjunction with completion of performance evaluations. 2e) Refine reporting on (a) upcoming due performance evaluations and (b) late performance evaluations. 2f) Include expectation of performance evaluations in the job description for staff managers. 2g) Include a review of the timeliness and quality of performance evaluations of supervisors in the performance evaluation of staff managers. 	<p>Staff know the expectations of supervisors and the competencies required to fulfill those expectations.</p> <p>Process measurement: Adoption of revised supervisor position description.</p> <p>Supervisors have a clear understanding of how they are performing based upon common standards.</p> <p>Process measurement: Adoption of competency-based performance evaluations.</p>	

Goals and Action Steps	Tasks to Complete Action Step	Intended Effects of Action Step / Measurement	Persons/Group Responsible & Completion Date for Action Step
	<p>4c) Develop aids for interviewers; e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – examples for scoring answers; – demonstration of necessary basic competencies such as computer literacy, writing ability, use of email, etc. <p>5) Assure that performance issues with supervisors are addressed by staff managers across the state utilizing a common approach. (consistent with approach to workers)</p> <p>5a) Develop written agency philosophy on dealing with performance issues.</p> <p>5b) Clearly distinguish any differences in dealing with performance of probationary vs. permanent employees.</p> <p>5c) Develop flow-chart for progressive discipline with points at which progressive discipline is planned through staffing (e.g., supervisor, staff manager and agency HR).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – include avenues for review when there is no consensus in the staffing <p>5d) Establish expectation that evaluations (and any progressive discipline) is requested and reviewed by the interviewer prior to transfers or promotions.</p>		
<p>Goal #2:</p> <p>Supervisors have the skills necessary to sufficiently and effectively supervise their staff.</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <p>1) Develop an organized formal plan for supervisor training (initial and on-going), to include timeline of when training is expected to be completed. ^{A1}</p> <p>2) Develop an organized formal plan for supervisors to learn how to optimally use technology and data as a supervisory tool. ^{1 A1}</p>	<p>1) Develop an organized formal plan for supervisor training (initial and on-going), to include timeline of when training is expected to be completed.</p> <p>1a) Identify a group of supervisors to meet regularly with training academy to provide input for the development of supervisor training and complete the tasks in this Action Step.</p> <p>1b) Research existing information re: appropriate KSAs for supervision and recommend a list to be used as the basis for competency training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – consider timelines for when a supervisor needs particular information – identify KSA's and competencies for new supervisors and experienced supervisors – include staffing clinical issues – all training of supervisors is within the context of the <p>1c) Work with training academy toward collection and reporting of supervisor training information (including timely completion of training).</p>	<p>Supervisors are trained on necessary KSAs in a timely manner.</p> <p>Measurement: FYSTA training records (report on timely completion and training evaluations)</p>	



Goals and Action Steps	Tasks to Complete Action Step	Intended Effects of Action Step / Measurement	Persons/Group Responsible & Completion Date for Action Step
	<p>1d) Work with training academy to assure that training for new initiatives includes training specific to supervising the new practice and this is presented to supervisors before training of workers and implementation.</p> <p>1e) Ensure the plan for any training includes specific supports for transfer of learning (e.g., in addition to a passport, or cookbook, which documents completion of various expectations, outlines post work) that accompany all classroom supervisor training, including DOA supervisor training.</p> <p>1f) Determine a process to evaluate that training and passport/cookbook is being utilized and there is accountability for it getting done (i.e., a trigger mechanism to keep supervisor and manager accountable for utilizing training and tools available to orientate supervisors to the work.)</p> <p>1g) Identify a way to evaluate the ongoing training needs of individual supervisors to help them get additional training/professional development needs met.</p> <p>2) Develop an organized formal plan for supervisors to learn how to optimally use technology and data as a supervisory tool.</p> <p>2a) Form a group representing supervisors, IT, ORCA, QA, policy and training to meet regularly and identify the reports that are possible and most salient to achieving outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being and complete the Tasks in this Action Step.</p> <p>2b) Provide input to ORCA training on the use of apps and reports and to IT for other tech training, including the use of Excel.</p> <p>2c) Provide input to the training academy in the development of training specific to using data as a management tool.</p> <p>2d) Research and evaluate (a) technology available and its applicability to Alaska's child Protection program and (b) other avenues for training re: technology; e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of <i>DragonSpeak</i>, - use of <i>Skype, video conferencing for distance supervision.</i> - <i>consideration of bandwidth.</i> <p>2e) Develop a plan to communicate information about available technical assistance to supervisors around the state.</p> <p>2f) Leadership will actively encourage supervisors to take advantage of available training in and outside the agency.</p>	<p>Supervisors use technology to become more productive.</p> <p><i>Measurement:</i></p>	



Goals and Action Steps	Tasks to Complete Action Step	Intended Effects of Action Step / Measurement	Persons/Group Responsible & Completion Date for Action Step
<p>Goal #3:</p> <p>Supervisors have consistent access to, and support to engage in professional development opportunities.</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <p>1) Define expectations and guidelines for an individualized plan for professional development based upon an assessment of KSA's. ^{B2}</p> <p>2) Develop a statewide plan for intra-agency knowledge sharing. ^{A2}</p>	<p>1) Define expectations and guidelines for an individualized plan for professional development, based upon an assessment of KSA's.</p> <p>1a) Leadership determines and provides supports for supervisors to take advantage of professional growth opportunities; e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – support to leave office/coverage, – work time to attend training/conferences/classes, – funding available or not, – expectations upon return from training / conferences / classes, etc. <p>1b) Develop an evaluation of ongoing training needs and professional development needs to create an individualized plan for each supervisor to engage in professional growth with timelines for development and review of plan e.g., bi-annual, annual, etc., possibly coinciding with performance evaluation.</p> <p>2) Develop a statewide plan for intra-agency knowledge sharing.</p> <p>2a) Select a group of supervisors to work with leadership to explore the feasibility of (a) a peer coaching program and (b) a mentoring program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – foci to include both clinical skills and personnel issues – opportunities to include both in- and out of the supervisor's own regions – opportunities to be provided both in-person and telephonic <p>2b) Group identified in 2a develops a plan with leadership for supervisors to network in person and through technology.</p> <p>2c) Hold an annual meeting for supervisors with field administrators and supervisors involved in planning the agenda, part of which is devoted to clinical skill building.</p> <p>2d) Hold quarterly meetings within each Region – if available, by video conferencing – which include Supervisors, CSMs, Administrative Managers.</p> <p>2e) Collect and maintain a listing of professional development opportunities in a shared area (e.g. Share Point) listing opportunities and resources, including links to websites, journals, articles, professional societies, etc.</p>		



Goals and Action Steps	Tasks to Complete Action Step	Intended Effects of Action Step / Measurement	Persons/Group Responsible & Completion Date for Action Step
<p>Goal #1:</p> <p>Supervisors are aware of and provide input into new practice initiatives and policy changes. ^{A3}</p> <p>Action Steps</p> <p>1) Refine the protocol for adopting and implementing policy changes which provides for input by supervisors.</p> <p>The phrase “specific aspects of the infrastructure” refers to those components of the organization identified in the Agency’s Infrastructure for Change; i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QA; • Leadership; • Supervision; • Staff Development; • Policy & Procedures; and • ORCA. 	<p>1) Refine the protocol for adopting and implementing policy changes which provides for input by supervisors.</p> <p>1a) Request that the existing policy committee continue to refine the protocol for adopting and implementing policy changes with consideration to the following tasks.</p> <p>1b) Review points at which supervisors are provided notice of pending changes.</p> <p>1c) Review mechanisms by which supervisors are provided notice of pending changes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>consider vehicles other than simply email notification</i> <p>1d) Review points at which supervisors should be provided opportunities for input.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>consider more targeted requests for feedback</i> <p>1e) Review specific vehicles by which supervisors provide input.</p> <p>1f) Review provisions for testing of new forms / ORCA screens (use of innovation sites) prior to statewide adoption.</p> <p>1g) Document the protocol for the process from initial determination of need for policy / practice change through implementation, including consideration of changes in specific aspects of the infrastructure to support the change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>consider process used in licensing relevant to policy and procedure changes</i> 	<p>A listing of committees, their purpose and members</p>	
<p>Goal #2:</p> <p>Supervisors have the skills necessary to sufficiently and effectively supervise their staff.</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <p>1) Develop an organized formal plan for supervisor training (initial and on-going), to include timeline of when training is expected to be completed. ^{A1}</p> <p>2) Develop an organized formal plan for supervisors to learn how to optimally use technology and data as a supervisory tool. ^{A1}</p>	<p>1) Distribute and make policy changes effective in a routine, foreseeable manner.</p> <p>1a) Set a specific date each month for policy distribution</p> <p>1b) Set the effective date of the policy is set in order to provide time for effecting the necessary changes in specific aspects of the infrastructure to support the change.</p> <p>2) Continue providing supervisors with the reason for policy / practice change.</p> <p>2a) In transmittals of all Policy and Program Instructions, include an explanation of the reason for the change.</p> <p>3) Provide the organizational supports necessary to effectively implement policy and practice changes.</p> <p>3a) In all transmittals of Policy and Program Instructions, include an explanation of how changes to specific aspects of the infrastructure will support the practice change.</p>		



Goals and Action Steps	Tasks to Complete Action Step	Intended Effects of Action Step / Measurement	Persons/Group Responsible & Completion Date for Action Step
<p>Goal #4:</p> <p>Supervisors will have the necessary tools and resources to achieve agency goals.</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Refine process for identifying and developing any needed reports in ORCA. <small>A2</small> 2) Re-align job duties to appropriate classifications and re-allocate positions to support in-classification job assignments. <small>C3</small> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Refine process for identifying and developing any needed reports in ORCA. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1a) Work group identified in Goal 3, Action Step 1, 1a with the addition of representative(s) from Research Unit refine the process of identifying new reports needed / enhancements to existing reports to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, the requester contacts ORCA Help Desk to find out if there is an existing report containing the requested data; • Develop protocol for determining new reports to be developed (including their prioritization) which contains a tracking mechanism by which to keep requesters informed of the status of their requests. 1b) Work group identified in 1a will refine the process of developing new reports / enhancing existing reports to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field participation in testing • Development of any redundant reporting necessary to determine accuracy of new reporting 2) Re-align job duties to appropriate classifications and re-allocate positions to support in-classification job assignments. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2a) Determine appropriate and necessary representatives to carry out this Action Step. 2b) Identify job classifications used in local offices. 2c) For each job classification identified, delineate job duties. 2d) Design and implement a statewide process to evaluate (by local office) what job duties are being performed by each job classification. 2e) Develop plans to re-align assignment of job duties within each office through addition of new, re-distribution of existing and/or re-assignment of duties. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Explore ways in which long-distance support to workers in remote locations could be provided.</i> 		



Goals and Action Steps	Tasks to Complete Action Step	Intended Effects of Action Step / Measurement	Persons/Group Responsible & Completion Date for Action Step
	<p>6d) Establish expectation that evaluations (and any progressive discipline) are requested and reviewed by the interviewer – and performance discussed with the current supervisor – prior to transfers or promotions.</p>		
<p>Goal #1:</p> <p>The roles of Supervisors in engaging and collaborating with the community are defined and job responsibilities are aligned to promote fulfillment of these roles. ^{A3}</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <p>1) Develop a process for identifying expectations for agency participation in the community (and, specifically, the role of supervisors) and the supports required to fulfill those expectations in a proactive manner.</p>	<p>1) Develop a process for identifying expectations for agency participation in the community (and, specifically, the role of supervisors) and the supports required to fulfill those expectations in a proactive manner.</p> <p>1a) Request that each region convene a group – to include regional management and supervisors – to (1) identify community stakeholders – including tribes – and their needs from the agency and (2) draft a plan to meet the identified needs which includes: (a) descriptions and assignments of expectations; (b) methods to support supervisors in meeting expectations; and (c) processes for sharing the community engagement with others.</p> <p>1b) Encourage input from local staff in refining the draft plan.</p> <p>1c) Share and discuss regional plans among regional management to promote exploration of approaches.</p> <p>1d) Create expectation that all supervisors will engage and collaborate with the community.</p> <p>1e) Finalize and implement regional plans.</p>	<p>Expectations for supervisors' participation in the community are commonly understood and supported.</p> <p>OCS staff are aware of issues and resources in the community.</p> <p>Positive relationships with the community are maintained / enhanced.</p> <p>Process measurement: Adoption of regional plans.</p>	
<p>Goal #2:</p> <p>Supervisors actively participate in the implementation of the supervision strategic plan and continuing efforts to enhance supervision. ^{A1}</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <p>1) Develop a vehicle for on-going input by supervisors into implementation of the supervision strategic plan and other efforts to enhance supervision.</p>	<p>1) Develop a vehicle for on-going input by supervisors into implementation of the supervision strategic plan and other efforts to enhance supervision.</p> <p>1a) Continue the existing supervision strategic plan work group to guide implementation until such time as an alternative vehicle is established.</p> <p>1b) see Appendix C</p> <p>1c) At least one member from each region of the original supervision strategic plan work group may be automatically appointed to the Committee if s/he volunteers and continued involvement is supported by their Staff Managers.</p> <p>1d) Upon establishment of the Committee as described in Appendix C, create subcommittees charged with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – finalizing the guidelines for its functioning; – developing a comprehensive plan for evaluation of the implementation and effects of the supervision strategic plan; and – developing a protocol for identifying issues in supervisor roles & responsibilities and developing recommendations for resolution (see Area #4, Goal #2). 		



Elements of the Work Group's Vision for Supervision

Staff Development and Support

- Staff interactions (including the supervisor / supervisee interaction) entails a focus on professional development
- Professional respect in all staff interactions
- Parallel process (i.e., interactions between staff at all levels will reflect respect and engagement just as workers are to approach their work with families)
- Data is used as a starting point for exploration (vs. determiner of good/bad)
- A culture of "assume the best"
- Joint ownership of problems
- Support for questioning (i.e., critical thinking, asking the tough questions) in both directions (open dialogue — OK to disagree or question why — TRANSPARENCY)
- Open communication of perceived strengths and concerns of workers to other supervisors (strength-based supervisors)

Consistency in practice (standardized practice decision making)

- Supervisory reviews
- Worker practices
- Interpretation / application of policies
- Supervision of supervisors
- Evaluation of workers (based upon practices rather than personality characteristics)

Selection of employees

- Selection of workers based knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities
- Selection of supervisors based knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities
- Confidence in supervisors' abilities

Equitable access to supports

- Training
- Personal / confidential space (i.e., office)
- Child Protection conference (staff seen as professionals)
- Access to out-of-state training
- Peer sharing of learning
- Consistent, routine conferences with own supervisor
- Access to own supervisor as needed (as needs present themselves)
- Use of technology, including but not limited to:
 - Dictation (issue: re-training of DragonSpeak for each new worker)
 - Feedback loops
 - Distance supervision
 - Skype, videoconferencing
 - Sufficient bandwidth to use ORCA statewide
 - Compensating for lack of bandwidth
- Resources (basic supplies)



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Consistent use of language / terms (e.g., Independent living vs. APPLA, Investigations vs. Assessments)

- Policy
- Guidance
- Training

Recognize and reward success

- Including efficiencies / effectiveness (i.e., more work is not the only reward)

Transition management (i.e., changes in leadership at the regional level)

- Training includes demonstration of competencies for all levels. Includes clinical skills and ORCA
- Plan for professional recruitment at all levels
- Consistency in addressing performance issues
- Develop formal OJT-note: this is an item identified within our PIP
- Individualized training required

Successful clinical practice

- Supervisor/worker ratio allows for shadowing, regular conferences, assessment of staff skills and staff development
- Strengthened supervision of supervisors (planned and pro-active)
- Competency with data as a management tool (note: supervisors are being trained within each region during the month of December on how to use the ORCA data reports, Excel, etc.)
- Office environment that provides for confidentiality in supervision
- Routine meetings

Partnership with agency leadership and accountability

- Decision support
- Avenues for input into decisions
- Acknowledgement of consideration of input
- Explanation of basis for decision
- Support for priorities / time to devote to priorities
- Greater consistency / organization of agency process (e.g., for policy issuance, all new policies are distributed only 1x per month on the 1st day of each month to reduce emails and overwhelming the field)
- Feedback is desired and embraced (e.g., policy)
- Trust in agency decisions
- Integration (organizational aspects support practice changes — e.g., practice changes and changes in ORCA)



Examples of Research Findings on Child Welfare Supervision

“Supervision appears to be the organizational factor most strongly related to staff retention. This suggests that agencies seeking to improve retention rates would do well to place the highest priority on the development of a cadre of supervisors with the knowledge and skills necessary to guide and support staff in carrying out their duties. Studies also indicate that it is important that organizations define the supervisory role as one of teacher and mentor rather than only as a monitor/administrator (Bernatovicz, 19911; Cicero-Reese & Black, 1998; Dickinson & Perry, 2003; Ellett, 1994; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003; Rycraft, 1994; Samantrai, 1992; Vinokur-Kaplan, 1994).

“To effectively mentor and model sound practices for staff, supervisors must themselves receive ongoing professional development. While it is clearly optimal to provide training to both front-line workers and their supervisors, when training dollars are in short supply, agencies might do well to make supervisors the primary targets of the most current curricula. Organizations might also examine the extent to which supervisors are provided other opportunities for supports such as networking across jurisdictional lines, participation in conferences and other learning opportunities, and to have their perspectives reflected in planning and agency decision making.”

“Current research indicates that many of the factors that affect the ability to recruit and retain staff have more to do with supervision and organizational issues in public child welfare agencies than with the attributes of their staff. In particular, studies have found that support from supervisors is positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intentions to stay in child welfare (Rycraft, 1994; Landsman, 2001; Dickinson & Perry, 2002; U.S. General Accountability Office, 2003; Smith, 2004). Despite the key role attributed to supervisors in staff retention, few training resources have been available for supervisors and managers.”

“Supervision is found in the empirical literature to affect organizational, worker and client outcomes on a number of levels. A number of studies have linked supervision to reduced worker stress (Himle, Jayaratne and Thyness, 1989; Martin and Schinke, 1998; Ratfill, 1988; Davis-Sacks, et. al., 1984; Ballew, 19119; and Buck, 19112). Others have found it to be significantly associated with turnover and staff retention, which is a major issue in public child welfare (Ellett and Millar, 2001; Schoen et. al., 2001; Cicero-Reese and Black, 1998; Harrison, 1994; Whelly and Miracle, 1994). According to Rycraft (1994), the most frequently cited reason that workers terminate employment in child protection is low-quality supervision. Interviews conducted in this study revealed that caseworkers feel their supervisor strongly influences staff morale, job satisfaction and job turnover.”

“The connection between supervision and worker practice, as well as client outcomes, has also been empirically documented. Banach (1999) explored the coping mechanisms of child welfare workers in a family preservation program. This study found that the workers managed boundary issues through supervision. Workers used supervision to clarify feelings about cases, define next steps and set limits. McGrew and Bond (19911) suggest that supervision is an important, but understudied, aspect of team service delivery. They reported that high-quality, consistent supervision of caseworkers has been associated with greater worker motivation. ... Bibus (1993) found that supervisors’ skills and workers’ skills in the use of supervision influenced workers’ initial engagement with clients, particularly with involuntary clients. Better skills resulted in more effective engagement and greater benefit to clients.”

“The supervisor is seen to be in a key role in promoting an organizational culture which is focused on client outcomes. Organizational climate was found to be a significant factor in promoting child psychosocial functioning, while interagency collaboration was not (Glisson and Hemmelgarn, 1998). Moore, Rapp & Roberts (2000) describe a three year project in Kansas that documented the beneficial impact that supervisors can have by using client outcome data to improve child welfare services, citing specifically improved staff morale; development of a common language and organizational culture;



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increased accountability; improved supervisory practice; improved child welfare policies; and increased performance. This supports the capacity of child welfare agencies to apply an evidence-based approach to their practice. These studies and other show that research into effective supervision in child welfare has the potential to impact the CPS system in a substantial way.”

³ Child Welfare League of America & Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth, and Families (2005). *Workforce Recruitment and Retention in Child Welfare – A Review of the Literature*. Retrieved February 14, 2007 from www.pacwcbt.pitt.edu/Organizational%20Effectiveness/Practice%20Reviews/CWLA%20wkfrce.DOC

⁴ Landsman, M. (2007). *Supporting child welfare supervisors to improve worker retention*. Child Welfare League of America. Retrieved February 12, 2007 from http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-32189874_ITM

⁵ Southern Regional Quality Improvement Center for Child Protection, (Unknown). *Review of Literature Associated with Social Work Supervision*. Retrieved February 14, 2007 from <http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/trc/qicfiles/SRQICLitReview&Biblio.pdf>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.



Child Protection Supervision Committee

Purpose

The primary purpose of the Child Protection Supervision Committee is to monitor the implementation and effects of the supervision strategic plan. A secondary purpose is to advise the leadership of the Office of Children's Services (OCS) on continuous improvement of supervision, including strategies and activities addressing expectations of supervisors inherent in new plans / initiatives.

Functions

Committee functions include:

- Monitoring the implementation and effects of OCS's strategic plan for supporting and improving child protection supervision and reporting the results to OCS Leadership.
- Recommending to OCS Leadership activities for incorporation into a strategic plan for supporting and improving child protection supervision, including strategies and activities addressing new expectations of supervisors inherent in new plans / initiatives.
- Serving as the planning committee, with other participants, for any conferences of Child Protection Supervisors.

Membership

Regional representatives: Each of the five administrative regions will have two representatives (Child Protection Supervisors) on the committee. Those supervisors who wish to serve and receive the support of their Regional Administrator are considered nominated for selection. Selection of regional representatives is determined through voting by Child Protection Supervisors within the region. Should a supervisor assume a position with another classification while serving on the Committee, s/he may complete his/her current term of appointment. Should a supervisor assume a position outside their original region while serving on the Committee, ...

Licensing representatives: Licensing will have two representatives on the committee. The process used for selection will mirror that used for regional representatives.

Representatives of Specialists: Specialists (e.g., reviewers, permanency planning, and ICWA) will have two representatives on the committee. The process used for selection will be similar to that used for regional representatives.

Representative of Intake: Intake will have one representative on the committee. The process used for selection will be similar to that used for regional representatives.

State Office / university partners: Participation on the committee — for pre-determined or indeterminate length of time — by representatives of State Office or university partners may be requested by the committee. The request for participation of such representatives will be made to OCS leadership except for the following representatives for which the request may go directly to the Unit manager:

CFSR Coordinator;
FYSTA;
QA staff;
ORCA.



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Additional members: Additional members may be added to the Committee by recommendation by the Committee to the leadership of OCS or by the leadership itself.

Terms of Service

Regional, Licensing, Specialists and Intake representatives: Representatives from the regions, licensing, specialists and intake are appointed for two year terms of service. These should be staggered for the purpose of continuity, so that one representative from each area is appointed annually (i.e., calendar year). They may be re-elected for additional terms of service.

State Office / university partners / additional members: Members whose participation was requested by the committee or leadership serve may continue to participate at the pleasure of the requester.

Responsibilities of Members

Members have a duty to promote quality in supervision within their area. This includes on-going communication with all staff within their area regarding the supervision strategic plan.

Meetings

The Committee is chaired by two co-chairs. One co-chair will be elected for a two-year term by the members during the Committee's first meeting of each calendar year. The co-chairs prepare the agendas for the meetings, convene the Committee, and chair the meetings. The co-chairs will also record attendance.

The Child Protection Supervision Committee meets at least quarterly with, normally, two of those being by teleconference and two conducted face-to-face. Additional meetings or variations in these standing meetings can be authorized by OCS leadership.

Whenever possible, the Committee will meet with Division leadership at the end of each of their meetings to de-brief on their activities. The co-chairs will prepare and submit to the Committee members and leadership a written report of the proceedings following each meeting.

One of the face-to-face meetings will be designated for the development of an annual report. This meeting will include review of the Committee's work in light of the supervision strategic plan, Practice Model and Vision for Supervision. The annual report on the activities of the Committee is prepared by the co-chairs and submitted to Leadership and will include a summary of each member's attendance of meetings — and reasons for any absence(s) — held during the preceding year.

Subcommittees

The Child Protection Supervision Committee can create subcommittees to focus on specific supervision activities and issues (e.g., planning for the creation of learning labs; planning for a supervisors' summit, etc.). Membership on the subcommittees does not have to be limited to the members of the Committee but can include other supervisors and other internal and external stakeholders, based on the subcommittees' foci.

Changes



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Leadership and the Committee will collaborate on any recommended changes in these guidelines. Any proposed change will be noted on the agenda for the meeting where a change will be discussed, and the agenda should be sent to the Committee's members prior to the meeting to give participants time to think about the proposed change.

Data and Technology

As the case management tool, ORCA captures information which can be used not only to report historical data but produce reports which can be used to advance both case-specific activities and general practices. In order to enhance the latter capacity, the supervision strategic plan includes interrelated activities designed to:

1. Increase input from the field on report design (both enhancement to existing reports and development of new reports);
2. Refine the process for selecting ORCA reports for enhancement / development; and
3. Training and coaching on the use of ORCA reports.

While initial identification of and resolution to duplicative reporting is a required first step, the on-going process involving the three activities above are necessary for continuing improvement in supervision, practice and outcome achievement.

Other technologies can also promote such improvements. Alaska poses unique challenges in the productive delivery of services and technology is viewed as holding promise for meeting these challenges. The supervision strategic plan, then, acknowledges a need to further develop our ability to identify and adopt new technology.

Note: Planning should include specifics as to how this group intersects with executive leadership group.
