

Practice Guidance: Group Supervision

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Group Norms

1. **Confidentiality:** Information about specific family cases ought to be kept confidential among the members of the group.

How can I establish and reinforce this norm in group supervision?

2. **Respect:** This includes respect for all group participants, the service recipient family members and for the supervision group process itself.

“The aspiration would be that any family member, service provider or other could walk into any consultation or space within the organization, hear themselves being referred to or discussed and feel completely respected” (Lohrbach, 2008).

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3. **Shared risk and responsibility:** The expectation is that all group members share responsibility for thinking through issues and concerns, considering various points of view, challenging each other, and reaching sound decisions and/or plans. Shared risk refers to the process of support in working through decisions that are often fraught with anxiety.

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4. **Responsible use of authority:** Recognize that authority is a statutory mandate and must be acknowledged in a straightforward way and utilized respectfully avoiding misusing it through labels like “uncooperative and resistant”. This may require a shift in organizational culture from “defensive practice” with primary emphasis on monitoring and accountability to emphasis on effective and best practice.

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5. **Reciprocity:** To both give and receive feedback, taking a learning posture.

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6. **Thoughtfulness:** Group supervision members are expected to think carefully and critically, and ask specific and focused questions to prompt consideration of all possibilities and avoid generalizations.

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7. **Discipline:** Conversation ought to be concise and accurately descriptive in observational and behavioral term – thorough without speculation, unproductive conjecture, venting or disrespectful “storytelling” about families.

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8. **Divergent points of views required and expressed:** Recognize that in group processes there is often pressure to gravitate toward the dominant point of view – often referred to as “group think”. Holding alternative and divergent views as important and working through the thinking behind them increases the likelihood that practitioners will be able to hold different views and positions simultaneously in their fieldwork – the foundation of critical thinking.

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9. **Thinking errors will be challenged:** Getting clear on what is unknown is the critical factor here rather than risk errors through speculation. This requires considerable skill and discipline from both facilitator and group members. All participants are exposing their work and care must be taken for the process to remain constructive and within a learning environment for critical thinking rather than criticism.

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(Lohrbach in collaboration with the Institute for Human Services, Ohio)