Module 3: Effective Field Supervision
1. To understand the elements of effective field supervision.

2. To identify strategies to incorporate these elements into the supervision of students.

3. To understand the elements of an effective supervisory conference.
A. Elements of Effective Field Supervision

Why do Field Instructors need to know about effective supervision methods?

- Research can provide valuable information. Much empirical research has been conducted on field supervision, particularly concerning student satisfaction with the field experience and the behaviors of field instructors that influence this satisfaction, both positively and negatively. This is information that each of you should know.

- Research indicates that the quality of the field instructor is the most significant factor affecting students’ satisfaction with the field placement (Fortune & Abramson, 1993). The quality of the field supervision provided is vital to the success of the overall placement experience.

- Field Instructors are busy. Even small changes can make a difference, and many of the elements we will discuss in this session involve only small changes.
A. Elements of Effective Field Supervision, cont.

Characteristics not associated with effective field supervision:

Before we examine the characteristics of an effective field instructor, let us look at some of the characteristics that are not associated with effective supervision (Fortune & Abramson, 1993; Knight, 1996)

- Age
- Race
- Gender
- Experience in social work
- Educational status
- Years of experience as a field instructor
- Position in the agency

This information suggests that it is only the quality of the supervision provided that influences students’ perceptions of their field instructor, rather than the field instructor’s personal characteristics (Knight, 1996).
A. Elements of Effective Field Supervision, cont.

Elements of Effective Supervision

The elements of effective field supervision can be divided into four categories:

- The agency
- Tasks and assignments
- Supervisory skills
- Supervision meetings
A. Elements of Effective Field Supervision, cont.

1. Elements related to the agency
   - Making the student feel desired by the agency
   - Including the student in agency functions and activities
   - Treating the student like a professional
   - Helping the student learn about the agency
2. Elements related to tasks and assignments

- Clarifying the purpose of the assignments
- Providing detailed directions and instructions
- Working with the student to complete tasks
- Regularly reviewing the student’s workload
- Providing a variety of learning activities
- Clarifying expectations for the student’s performance
- Providing early opportunities for client contact
3. Elements related to supervisory skills
   - Explaining your role and the role of the student
   - Encouraging discussion of the student’s concerns
   - Encouraging discussion of taboo subjects
   - Helping the student link theory to practice
   - Providing clear and consistent feedback
   - Validating the student’s feelings
   - Reassuring students that they can succeed
   - Demonstrating that the student is valued as a person and as a colleague
A. Elements of Effective Field Supervision, cont.

4. Elements related to supervision meetings
   - Holding regularly scheduled supervision meetings
   - Being available outside of regular supervision times
   - Providing a thorough discussion of the student’s learning needs
   - Reviewing and analyzing the student’s cases
   - Providing consistent supervision throughout the placement

(Adapted from Ellison, 1994; Fortune & Abramson, 1993; Fortune et al., 2001; Gray, Alperin, & Wik, 1989; Knight, 1996, 2001; Lzar & Eisikovits, 1997)
The supervisory conference is crucial to the success of the field placement. Research indicates that students want consistent and regularly scheduled supervision sessions throughout the field placement (Fortune & Abramson, 1993; Gray et al., 1989; Knight, 2001).

Research also indicates that there are specific topics that students want to discuss during their supervision sessions (Gray et al., 1989).
What do students want to discuss during supervision meetings?

Research indicates that during supervision sessions, elements associated with student satisfaction are primarily issues concerning students’ practice experiences (Gray et al., 1989).

These topics include:

- The practice skills used by students
- Cases and clients
- Ongoing performance issues
- Personal strengths and limitations
B. The Supervisory Conference, continued

Topics not associated with satisfaction:

- Community issues
- Administrative issues
- Classroom assignments
- Agency gossip
What can we learn from this?

- Students want direct and practical information that is going to help them become ethical and effective social workers
- Students want dedicated time with their supervisor to focus on their practice issues

Although students may want to discuss issues such as career plans and classroom assignments with their field instructors, research (Gray, et al., 1989) suggests that students do not want to discuss these issues during supervision sessions.

Students want this time with their field instructor to focus on their practice, their work in the field, and areas that need improvement.

While this study (Gray et al., 1989) focused primarily on micro-level placements, students in macro-level placements are likely to prefer these topics as well.
Research has also identified elements of supervision that are not effective (Ellison, 1994)—which means that there are things to avoid!

- Supervision that is too directive—students are not given opportunities to practice skills on their own or learning opportunities are limited.
- Lack of monitoring—failure to monitor the student’s workload or failure to make arrangements for supervision during the field instructor’s absence.
- Inappropriate use of the student—assigning tasks that do not meet the learning needs of the student or assigning tasks that are too difficult or too easy.
- Inadequate supervisory contact—meeting infrequently or allowing too little time to meet.
- Lack of information—failure to provide students with necessary information or instructions; failure to provide adequate feedback concerning their performance.
In a separate Word document, describe how you incorporate the four elements of effective field supervision:

- The agency
- Tasks and assignments
- Supervisory skills
- Supervision meetings

in your role as a Field Instructor. You should write at least a full paragraph on each area and you should discuss how you structure your supervisory sessions. In addition, discuss any areas of field instruction in which you would like additional information (be specific).

Email the completed document to the CSUF Director of Field Education: cford@fullerton.edu

Be sure to include your name, your agency and your contact information. If you have any questions, please call the Field Education office at 714-278-8479.
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