Basic Field Instructor Training

Module 7
Effective Feedback and Evaluation
Learning Objectives for Module 7

1. Review and increase understanding of the role of feedback in the social work supervision process

2. Understand and utilize the elements of effective feedback

3. Review and practice the elements of summative evaluation
Constructive feedback is information-specific, issue-focused, and based on observations.

The goal of constructive feedback is learning.

Constructive feedback identifies performance that is appreciated and/or needs improvement.

Research indicates that students prefer field instructors who give them ongoing and critical feedback regarding their performance.*

Praise and criticism are both personal judgments about a performance effort or outcome, with praise being a favorable judgment and criticism, an unfavorable judgment.

Information given is general and vague, focused on the person, and based on opinions or feelings.

Avoid the use of praise and criticism in your work with students.

*Ellison, 1994; Fortune & Abramson, 1993; Fortune, et al, 2001; Freeman, 1985
Elements of Constructive Feedback

- **Be direct when delivering your message.** Get to the point and avoid beating around the bush. Both negative and positive feedback should be given in a straightforward manner.

- **Avoid “need to” phrases, which send implied messages that something that didn’t go well.** For example, “Jane, you need to get your reports turned in on time, and you need to spell check them.” This message is not really performance feedback. It implies that Jane did not do something well with her reports, but it doesn’t report exactly what happened. Providing clarity on what occurred is the aim of feedback.

- **Be sincere and avoid giving mixed messages.** Sincerity says that you mean what you say with care and respect. Mixed messages are referred to as “yes, but” messages. For example, “John, you have worked hard on this project, but...” What follows is something the person is not doing well and is the real point of the message. The word “but,” along with its cousins “however” and “although,” when said in the middle of a thought, create contradictions or mixed messages. In essence, putting “but” in the middle tells the other person, “Don’t believe a thing I said before.”

- **In positive feedback situations, express appreciation.** Appreciation alone is praise. Yet when you add it to the specifics of constructive feedback, your message carries an extra oomph of sincerity. For example: “Sue, your handling of all the intake forms while John did the callbacks made for an efficient effort and showed good teamwork. Everything you did was accurate, as well. Thanks so much for helping out. Such initiative is a real value to the team.”

- **In negative feedback situations, express concern.** A tone of concern communicates a sense of importance and care and provides the appropriate level of sincerity to the message. Tones such as anger, frustration, disappointment, and the ever-popular sarcasm tend to color the language of the message and turn attempts at negative feedback into criticism. The content of the message gets lost in the noise and harshness.

- The purpose of negative feedback is to create awareness that can lead to correction or improvement in performance. If you can’t give negative feedback in a helpful manner, in the language and tone of concern, you defeat its purpose.
The goal of feedback in the field placement is learning.

We expect students to make mistakes and errors in judgment while in the field placement.

Students can only improve their practice if these mistakes are identified and suggestions are made for improvement.

Field Instructors are an extension of the classroom and must provide constructive feedback to students in order to facilitate learning and to promote ongoing improvement.
When to Give Feedback?

- Feedback should be a regular part of the weekly supervision.

- Feedback is meant to be given in real-time, as close as possible to when the performance incident occurs so that the events are fresh in everyone's minds. When feedback is given well after the fact, the value of the constructive feedback is lessened.

- When giving negative feedback, you may want to apply a different timeline: ASAR (as soon as reasonable/ready — that is, when you're ready). Sometimes when an incident happens, you aren't feeling too good about it, and you need time to cool off and get your thoughts in order before you give negative feedback (so that your manner displays a tone of concern). Doing that may mean giving the feedback tomorrow rather than right now, but tomorrow is still timely, and your feedback will come across as far more constructive.
Think about some of your experiences receiving critical feedback. What was positive about these experiences? What was negative about these experiences? How do you like to receive critical feedback?

You may want to write these reflections down to review as you prepare to give feedback to your student. Most of us experience some discomfort regarding confrontation. Taking the time to reflect how you would want to receive feedback will be helpful to your student.
Feedback should contain all of these elements in order to be constructive:

1. Clear guidelines for performance
2. Direct observation rather than comments from others
3. Empathy- students need to feel that their Field Instructor understands them, so analyze the situation from the student’s perspective
4. Timeliness
5. Regularity
6. Balance- both positive and negative feedback should be offered
7. Conciseness and directness- clear and easy to understand with specific and concrete suggestions for change
8. Follow-up--check on how your student has utilized the feedback
You observe your student conducting her first interview with a new client. During this interview, the student appears very nervous and uncomfortable asking several questions. The client’s responses contain several inconsistencies that the student does not address. After several minutes, the student concludes the interview without obtaining several important pieces of information.

In a separate Word document, describe how you would provide your student with feedback. Be as descriptive as possible and use direct quotes of what you might actually say. It might be helpful to use a process recording format for completing this assignment. Be sure to include your plan for follow-up as well as how you might handle it if your student became defensive or non-accepting of your feedback.
“Giving evaluations is one of the most difficult, demanding and complex tasks teachers have to face; yet, done well, it is also one of the most significant spurs to learning. Because teachers’ evaluations are invested with enormous significance by students...a critical comment from a teacher can be psychologically devastating. So giving evaluations is, quite rightly, the feature of practice that gives rise to the most continuous soul-searching....And this is as it should be.” (Brookfield, 1990, p.132)
The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) educational policy and accreditation standards (EPAS) require each social work program to have field performance criteria and outcome measures.

These criteria form the basis of the formal evaluation.

In Southern California, the Joint Field Consortium have all agreed to use the same Comprehensive Skills Evaluation of Student Performance (see website: http://hhd.fullerton.edu/MSW/Fieldwork/Form.htm).

The Comprehensive Skills Evaluation measures student performance in 5 Core Areas:

- Professional Responsibility and Identify of Social Work Profession
- Responsibility as a Learner
- Knowledge of the Fieldwork Agency and the Community
- Organization, Work Management, and Communication Skills
- Micro and Macro Practice and Intervention Skills
Elements of the Evaluation Process

- The evaluation process begins with the formation of the Learning Plan at the beginning of the fall semester.

- By setting learning goals, the student has a clear understanding of the expectations for performance by which she/he will be evaluated.

- Have your student evaluate themselves using the Comprehensive Skills Evaluation tool, then discuss it in your supervision session.

- When going over your evaluation of your student during supervision, be sure you can give clear examples of student performance that lead to the rating given.

- Remember to contact your Faculty Field Liaison for assistance (especially if you are completing your first student evaluation).
Some Field Instructors fear if they are too honest in their evaluation of the student:

- The student will change their opinion of the Field Instructor
- The school might not send another student
- The Field Instructor/student relationship will be broken
- The student will get a bad grade

Field Instructors frequently wait too long to discuss their concerns/observations about the student with the Faculty Field Liaison

- When this occurs, valuable time has been lost with the student that could have fostered growth

Sometimes, students are not a good fit for the profession. When these concerns are not addressed early, the student has a false sense of optimism about their future in social work.
Module 7 Completion

- Please send the Word document for the assignment on slide #9 to:
  - cford@fullerton.edu
  - Include your name and the date on the document
CONGRATULATIONS!

You have now completed all 7 modules of Basic Field Instructor Training. In order to receive your Certificate of Completion, please do the following:

Send an email to cford@fullerton.edu

Include your full name, date you completed the last module, your license #, the address where you would like the certificate sent.

If you have suggestions for Advanced Field Instructor seminar topics, please send them along. Please indicate if you would like to be informed of upcoming trainings for Field Instructors.
