

Enhanced Practice: Strength-Based Staff Supervision

Overview

This details a strength-based approach to the supervision of the staff who are monitoring and supporting the relationships of mentoring pairs, commonly referred to as “match support”. It outlines specific practices for supervisors to integrate into their approach to the supervision of the staff providing match support that enhances the professional development of the staff as well as the quality of the support they are providing.

Strength-Based Supervision Enhances Match Support

There are two enhanced practices that relate to specifically to how staff support matches. One is staff training on content that enhances one’s understanding of circumstances they may encounter in their conversations. By reading and completing the suggestions exercises in the [Staff Training Toolkit](#), staff gain a depth of understanding to draw upon as they work with mentors and families. The other practice is an [Enhanced Match Support](#) approach that is integrated into your agency’s regular match support process that promotes an intentional strength-based perspective. The enhanced practice for supervision further enhances the quality of match support and is **implemented by the person in the role of monitoring and supporting the match support staff**. In addition to monitoring and supporting the mentoring relationship as it develops, strength-based **supervision supports the professional development of the staff**.

Key Components of Strength-Based Supervision

Strength-based supervision coaches the match support staff in providing enhanced match support to the mentor, child, and parent/caregiver. The approach includes the following components in conducting supervision meetings:

- Begin the supervision meeting with a conversation about a match that is going well.
- Discuss each match with the supervisor bi-monthly (minimum).
- Supervision sessions are scheduled at least bi-weekly and allot time for enhanced practices to be integrated into standard supervision approach.
- Conversations about matches focus on what is going well as well as areas of growth.
- Staff is encouraged to identify their own strengths and areas for development in match support
- Goals are identified for the staff that are supported and recognized in supervision.
- Child safety and well-being are discussed.
- A case-specific discussion of each match includes a review of documentation of the match activities and match support conversations with staff, assessment of relationship development, and any issues that will require follow-up or additional support.
- Areas of strength as well as areas of interest for development of the individual staff are identified. Strategies to address the areas for development are discussed.

Flow of Support

Threaded throughout a strength-based approach to mentoring is a strong value of growth and development. With an intentional focus on supporting the child in pursuing their interests and aspirations, mentors are also supported in developing their own skills in cultivating a quality relationship through training opportunities and match support conversations. The role of match support is critical to this process. Research clearly documents a link between quality match support and quality match relationships. A strength-based supervision approach broadens this culture of growth and development to include the staff supporting the match relationship.

Enhanced Practice: Strength-Based Staff Supervision

Supervisor

- Supervisor meets at least bi-weekly for 90 minutes with match support
- Case based supervision protocol supports implementation of enhanced match support and supervision
- Each case is discussed monthly (at a minimum, discussed bi-monthly)
- Session is framed as a staff development opportunity
- Monitors child safety
- Assess and address needs
- Capture ideas and innovations

Match Support

- Match Support contacts parents, child, mentor monthly
- Integrates enhanced practice protocols for match support to standard program practice
- Implementation of strength-based approach with emphasis on child's assets, interests, and building connections.
- Family engagement and support is intentionally considered.

Match

- Child is engaged in planning activities that relate to their assets, interests, and aspirations.
- Mentor is supported in cultivating a relationship with the child and the family that fosters growth and development.
- Parent is engaged as a resource in supporting the match by sharing insights and suggestions and facilitating match activities within the family's schedule.

Enhanced Practice: Strength-Based Staff Supervision

Coaching Match Support Staff

Match support is more than asking questions and capturing data. Match support staff is facilitating and supporting the development of the mentoring relationship. To do this, supervisors consider how their conversations could provide motivation and encouragement. These sessions are opportunities for a rich staff development experience. Here are some ways staff can work towards coaching the match in realizing the potential of the relationship.

Match Life Cycle

- Help staff to understand and recognize the natural progression of a mentoring relationship. Encourage this as means of assessing growth and areas of concern. By asking intentional questions about what they are observing in the progression of the relationship, supervisors can help develop this skill.

Probing Questions

- Ask questions that dig a bit deeper into understanding the unique qualities of what staff are sharing. Encourage them to examine the questions they are asking and the information that is learned. As they explore the types of questions they might want to include in their conversations, touch back on what they learned in a future meeting. Provide positive feedback on quality conversations. Some examples of questions could be: "Did you learn what you needed to with that conversation?" "What other ways might you get at that?"

Active Listening

- Help staff to recognize their own growth and development by reflecting back what you are observing and hearing. Supervisors sit in a position that allows a unique perspective to make connections easily missed when one is immersed in the relationship. This will require a lot of listening. This is where you will gain helpful insights to share, hear subtleties and nuances to explore, and capture ideas for suggestions. You can also help people gain their own insights by reflecting back what you have heard to check your understanding. This might include a check on feelings, reflecting on a positive aspect of what you've heard, recognizing growth, and providing positive feedback.

Goal Focused

- In addition to considering each match individually, encourage broader reflection with conversations about what staff consider to be "going well" – what are their goals for the match support they are providing and what are some ways they would expect to see progress. Make sure even the smallest movement towards this progress is pulled out and highlighted. Identify ways that you and the agency could support them in experiencing success.

Documentation

- Match support documentation should tell supervisors the story of the match. Documentation of your supervisory sessions is also important. There will be specific points that you will want to follow-up on in your next session.

Enhanced Practice: Strength-Based Staff Supervision

Strategies for Successful Supervision Stations

Below are some suggestions for getting the most of your strength-based supervision sessions. The goal of these sessions is to bring an intentional focus on the strengths in the mentoring relationship and how match support staff has been able to positively influence, support and foster the match relationship.

Structure Your Session

- ✓ Schedule the session at a regular time and day to support consistency and avoid missed appointments.
- ✓ Consider specific blocks of time within the session to address each point. How much time will be allotted for general check-in, specific case review, and discussion of goals and next steps?
- ✓ Do the math. If you know that you have 8 matches to discuss, monitor how much time you will spend on each one.
- ✓ Identify goals for the supervision session at the start of the session.
- ✓ Have check points at key times during the session to balance use of time.

Use a Strength Based Approach

- ✓ Start the conversation with “what’s going well?” What are some highlights? What are some accomplishments?
- ✓ Start with strong matches and explore why they view these matches as going well.
- ✓ Invite discussion about things they’ve done in match support that had positive outcomes.
- ✓ Recognize the unique individual assets of match support staff.
- ✓ Set goals for growth and development of match support staff.

Ask Questions to Check on Program Implementation

- ✓ What are some of the interests and aspirations you are hearing about when you talk with the mentors and children?
- ✓ What types of service linkages have been helpful for families?
- ✓ Have any of your families participated in the activities we hosted?
- ✓ What are you hearing from mentors about their pre-match training? What are some ways you’ve been able to reinforce that content in your conversations?
- ✓ What types of community events have the matches been doing? What’s worked to help them get out there and explore the community?
- ✓ Encourage review of the Strength-based Match Support resource, training toolkit, and other learning opportunities.

Ask Questions to Check on Program Implementation

- ✓ Ensure physical and psychological safety and security are addressed during match support calls.
- ✓ Use a structure that is developmentally appropriate, with clear expectations for behavior as well as increasing opportunities to make decisions, to participate in governance and decision-making, and to take on leadership roles as one matures and gains more expertise.
- ✓ Offer emotional and moral support.
- ✓ Opportunities to experience supportive adult relationships
- ✓ Opportunities to feel a sense of belonging and being valued
- ✓ Opportunities to develop positive social values and norms
- ✓ Opportunities for skill building and mastery

Enhanced Practice: Strength-Based Staff Supervision

- ✓ Opportunities to develop confidence in their abilities to master their environment
- ✓ Opportunities to contribute to their community and to develop a sense of purpose
- ✓ Strong links between families, schools, and broader community resources

Keep in Mind

The enhanced practices are not intended to replace an agency's business as usual practices. Supervisors should integrate these practices into their individual approach to supervision. Your approach to supervision is unique. Consider how these practices can be integrated into your personal approach.