

Online Clinical Supervision During COVID-19

Site Supervisor Training- Fall 2020

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Objectives

- Participants will understand the implications of COVID-19 for supervision and training.
- Participants will learn how they can use technology to facilitate clinical supervision.
- Participants will learn fundamental clinical, professional, and ethical factors to keep in mind when engaging in supervision via technology.
- Participants will understand the foundational tools and dispositions needed to conduct effective online supervision.

Bernard and Goodyear (2014) defined clinical supervision as a professional relationship between an experienced member (supervisor) of the field and a developing professional (supervisee) that promotes the supervisee's overall professional development and competent delivery of counseling service to clients.

Background

- During the COVID-19 global pandemic, outpatient clinical practice has almost exclusively become a telehealth practice in order to ensure the safety of clinicians and clients.
- Similarly clinical supervision, both individual and group supervision of counselors in training also followed the same telehealth model.
- Although the method of facilitating supervision has changed the essence of what is important in clinical supervision has not
- The supervisory relationship can play a major role in developing the trainees' sense of self-efficacy and competence, this is even more true while working during challenging and uncertain circumstances of a global pandemic

STUDENTS AND TELEBEHAVIORAL HEALTH

([ACA, COVID-19 FAQs](#))

- **Does the ACA Student Group Liability policy insure training by supervised master-level practicum and internship students who facilitate counseling via telebehavioral health services?**
- Master-level students with HPSO liability insurance may be covered for telebehavioral health counseling sessions if they are a counselor-in-training (masters level intern) and if they meet the following conditions:
 - 1) The scope of practice of the licensed site supervisor permits the practice of telebehavioral health;
 - 2) The site supervisor is trained to provide both clinical services and supervision for this type of service delivery;
 - 3) The counselor-in-training receives proper training to facilitate telebehavioral sessions;
 - 4) The site supervisor is available for the trainee or client; as needed, and
 - 5) Funding sources for each client session allows the trainee to provide counseling (i.e., the supervisor or agency should make sure the trainee is authorized to provide counseling services based on the funding source or contract).
- Note that if items 1-5 above are met, and if supervision by both the university and site supervisors are fulfilled, the trainee would presumably be training within their “scope of practice” as an intern. Therefore, HPSO would likely cover their clinical work at an approved site. Volunteering at another unapproved site or “moonlighting” on their initiative, however, would not be covered.

Review of the Literature on Technology-Assisted Distance Supervision (Carlisle et al. 2017; Woo et al. 2020)

- Distance clinical supervision has traditionally been defined as supervision that is conducted over an electronic modality such as videoconferencing (e.g., Skype, WebEx, and Zoom) and email.
 - One advantage of distance supervision is that it can provide flexibility in scheduling supervision sessions
 - Due to the increase in flexibility and overall convenience that distance supervision allows this supports the continuity of client care
 - One frequent concern with online supervision is the issue of confidentiality
 - Lack of competence is another major factor that poses a challenge to distance supervision

Special Considerations for Online Supervision During COVID-19

- Competence of the supervisor
 - Supervisors often are seen as role models. Taking steps towards competence in the areas of technology assisted counseling and supervision is imperative. Additionally, being cognizant of reluctance with the use of technology is warranted.
 - American Counseling Association 2014 Code of Ethics does specify that when using technology in supervision that supervisors are competent in the use of the technology and necessary precautions for ensuring client confidentiality are taken (ACA, 2014)
 - Lastly, the ACES best practices guidelines recommend that distance supervision must “clearly approximate face-to-face synchronous contact” (ACES, 2011, p. 5)

Special Considerations for Online Supervision During COVID-19

- Handling Crises

- One essential role of supervisors in early training is to serve as a resource in high risk situations. Having a clear plan in place to manage such situations is vital (Barnett, 2011 & Scharff et al, 2020). Recommended procedures include:
 - Supervisors knowing the supervisees exact schedule
 - Ability to add supervisors to the phone or video call if needed
 - Ensuring the supervisee has all direct numbers of supervisors and emergency resources on hand
 - Ensuring the supervisee confirms location of client at the onset of the session in the case it is necessary to call a mobile crisis unit for a client in distress

Special Considerations for Online Supervision During COVID-19

- Establishing a working supervisory alliance

- The three core elements of the working alliance, as outlined by Bordin (1983), are the bond between the supervisor and the supervisee, the collectively established goals that guide supervision and the shared tasks that drive the goal attainment of supervision.

So what would this look like in online supervision?

- Facilitating supervision from a private space free of distractions.
- Communication is critical in order to clarify any concerns and in forming an effective supervisory working alliance.
- Utilizing various forms of feedback in terms of synchronous and asynchronous, length and depth may help facilitate and clarify any expectations that may be unclear.
- The supervisor needs to be attuned to the supervisee's reflections, their fears, their learning curve both within their client work, and issues with technology.

Special Considerations for Online Supervision During COVID-19

- Confidentiality

- Choosing a platform that is HIPAA compliant is recommended (i.e. EHRs, Google Meet via GSuite). All other platforms should be used in good faith while maintaining client confidentiality (password protected, use of waiting rooms).
- Facilitating supervision from a private space and ensuring this is the case for the supervisee
- Having guidelines how to use all other forms of technology
 - Ex: What is ok to include in an email? A text?

Other Helpful Tools to Support Effective Online Supervision

- Shared Drives
 - Google, Box, Dropbox
- Live Observation
- Use of video conferencing tools
 - Shared screens, whiteboards, breakout rooms (for group supervision)
- Parallel Process – using online supervision to assist students in conductive effective and ethical online counseling sessions

Summary of Tips for Online Supervision

1. Set clear expectations and goals for online supervision
2. Focus on the supervisory relationship
3. Discuss a plan to manage technical problems
4. Pay attention to communication (verbal and nonverbal)
5. Protect online security, safety, confidentiality
6. Factor in additional time
7. Review and check in with the supervisee regularly regarding online supervision arrangements

Resources

- Online Therapy Institute <https://www.onlinetherapyinstitute.com/supervisor/>
- Now what?: Navigating supervision and clinical training during COVID-19 - <https://youtu.be/oyiZY8jYYog>
- Zur Institute- Corona Virus & TeleMental Health: Act Now- <https://www.zurinstitute.com/clinical-updates/corona-virus-telemental-health-act-now/>
- Motivo: offering all AAMFT members a free, HIPAA-compliant platform for virtual supervision during COVID-19. Read their announcement, [*Supporting Our Supervisors During COVID-19*](#), for more information.
- St. Edward's University Site Supervisors Website-<http://sites.stedwards.edu/macss/>

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