

Chapter 6.3

Challenges and Solutions in the Delivery of Clinical Cybersupervision

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ABSTRACT

Supervision is both a special case of instruction and a critical aspect of professional development. The ongoing development of Web-based infrastructures and communication tools provides opportunities for cybersupervision. Advantages of cybersupervision for counselor training include opportunities to provide location-independent, “live” supervision of counseling sessions in which: (a) evaluative feedback is communicated in “real time” using text or graphical modalities; (b) audio

evaluative feedback is digitally recorded in “real time” for post-session playback; and, (c) weekly, hour-long, supervision sessions are conducted using either synchronous (e.g., multifeatured video conferencing, chat room) or asynchronous (video recording, email) Web-based communication tools. Challenges to quality online supervision include communicating critical supervisor characteristics, developing an effective supervisor/supervisee online relationship, insuring requisite personal dispositions and computer skills, implementing a theoretical model of supervision, and resolving legal and ethical problems. Authors examine these advantages, challenges, and solu-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60960-561-2.ch603

tions in the context of two online supervision/instructional models for training counselors (i.e., professional counselors, psychologists, clinical social workers, and psychiatrists) and discuss the generalizability of the cybersupervision model for professional training in a variety of fields that include medicine, law, and education.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

The reader will be able to:

- Identify advantages, challenges, and solutions related to the delivery of online clinical supervision/instruction
- Apply methods of two supervision theories in the delivery of cybersupervision
- Understand how synchronous and asynchronous communication tools can be used to facilitate the development of clinical skills through the delivery of online supervision
- Draw conclusions regarding the value of cybersupervision for clinical and other professional training and development

INTRODUCTION

Supervision is a critical aspect of training and development for professionals in a variety of fields. It is a process by which a highly skilled or master practitioner observes and evaluates the performance of a novice with the goal of promoting the development of requisite knowledge and skills for competent practice. One can scarcely imagine a psychotherapist or medical doctor providing services to patients without benefit of supervision during their training programs. Yet, supervision is a costly and time consuming process that frequently strains the financial and human resources of organizations charged with these responsibilities. These costs are incurred

as supervisors take time from routine duties that generate income for businesses and organizations to provide supervision that does not typically produce income. Supervisors are also frequently required to provide supervision services at remote locations that require compensation for travel time and mileage. Taken together, these challenges create circumstances that may limit both the quantity and quality of supervision.

Supervision of clinical work typically occurs during the middle to later stages of graduate education of future mental health professionals. Students will have completed didactic coursework (i.e., theories, clinical methods/techniques, ethical/legal issues) and are ready to apply this knowledge in direct services to clients in a practicum or internship setting. In most cases, clinical programs are affiliated with a counseling clinic so that students' (i.e., supervisees') first introduction to counseling occurs in a highly-structured environment. Viewing sessions from an observation room, the course instructor (i.e., supervisor) carefully observes supervisees' performances and session dynamics, and intervenes when necessary. This initial practicum experience is usually followed in subsequent semesters by field placements or internships in a variety of mental health, hospital, community agency, and/or school settings. Internship supervision is typically provided by an on-site supervisor on a weekly basis and by a university supervisor at less frequent intervals.

What should be evident from this brief description of clinical supervision is that it is a special case of instruction. In order to provide clinical supervision, laws in many states mandate that counselors complete specialized training and earn a supervision credential. During this training, counselors are typically taught to provide supervision using two to three major supervision models (with specialized training in alternative models). What they learn, in fact, are different instructional models for providing supervision. Each model corresponds to a particular theoretical perspective and instructional methodology, which

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