

Effective Reflection

Selecting, training and
supporting supervisors



Introduction

This is a manual on ‘Selecting, Training and Supporting Supervisors’. This manual provides points of reference for making a considered choice in the selection, training and support of supervisors in organisations for children’s services. We know that the quality of the care provided is directly related to the outcomes for clients.³⁻⁵ And we know that learning from each other helps to improve this quality. A competent supervisor is essential in this.

This manual is one of the products of the project ‘Effective Reflection: reference for quality control in child welfare and child protection’ (*Effectieve Reflectie: handvat voor kwaliteitsbewaking in de zorg voor jeugd*), which is a collaborative effort of the research group Implementation and Effectiveness in Youth Care Services (*Kwaliteit en Effectiviteit in de Zorg voor Jeugd*), Altra Education & Youth Care (*Altra Onderwijs & Jeugdhulp*), Child protection services Amsterdam (*Jeugdbescherming Amsterdam*) and Spirit Youth Care & Parenting Support (*Spirit Jeugd & Opvoedhulp*). This manual goes with two other manuals including ‘Supervision with video recordings and role-play’¹ and ‘Developing a reflection tool’². These manuals can be found at www.hva.nl/youthcareservices. The project has been financially supported by Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMw) under grant number 729102005 (2015).

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1. Introduction

Supervision plays a key role in designing learning in the workplace. Supervision refers to support sessions aimed at the implementation of the intervention^a. The supervision of professionals requires specific knowledge and skills, and thus a competent supervisor. However, supervisors often also require support themselves in carrying out their tasks. Research has shown that supervisors often receive supervision and/or peer feedback or take part in refresher sessions for supervisors³. This manual addresses what a supervisor must be able to do and how he/she can be selected, trained and supported.

Individual and group supervision

The provision of individual supervision is different to the provision of group supervision. The main difference is that, during individual supervision, there is room to address the professionals' personal questions in detail and the supervisor can offer advice if necessary.

In group supervision, the intention is far more for professionals to learn from each other. The supervisor plays a supporting role in this. Almost all competences that are important for supervisors who provide individual supervision are also important for supervisors who provide group supervision. Supervisors who provide supervision to groups also require additional knowledge and skills, for example concerning group dynamics and the supervision of groups. This manual focuses mainly on the selection, training and support of supervisors who provide supervision to groups, but can also be used for the selection, training and support of supervisors who provide individual supervision.

Note to readers

This manual focuses on the organisation in which the supervisor works. The chapters in this manual refer in brief to various possibilities of selection (Chapter 2), training (Chapter 3) and support of supervisors (Chapter 4). The choices made in the project '*Effectieve Reflectie. Handvat voor kwaliteitsbewaking in de zorg voor jeugd*' are cited as examples at the end of each chapter. The data on which this manual is based is described in the last chapter (Chapter 5).

^a This manual covers interventions. The term intervention is a collective name for programmes, training methods, courses, forms of treatment and supervision, methods, sanctions, etc.

2. Selection

2.1 Prior education

A supervisor must have completed a bachelor level (professional) education. Depending on the severity of the issues affecting the target group clients or the level of the professionals, master-level education may be preferred. At bachelor level this could be Social Work, at master level this could be Social Work, Psychology or other programmes focused on child and youth care sciences. Finally, the preference is for a supervisor to be trained in intervention so that he/she has sufficient knowledge of the subject to be able to disseminate it and pass it on.

2.2 Work experience

It is very important that supervisors have work experience in the intervention about which they provide supervision. This helps them in the supervision of the professionals who carry out the intervention. A supervisor explains: *“It helps me, I know the [intervention] inside and outside of course, all the problems you encounter in families, searching for what therapists do [...] the assumption is that you can also be a supervisor without having been a therapist, but it has great added value”* (systemic intervention supervisor). At the very least, relevant work experience in a similar field is needed. A trainer explains: *“Someone who has never worked with families before or who has never worked with any kind of feedback system or is wholly unfamiliar with the target group, and who applies for a job as a supervisor, has of course a much lower chance”* (systemic intervention trainer). Depending on the complexity of the intervention, it may be a requirement for supervisors to also be active as therapists or trainers.

2.3 Competences

A supervisor has a variety of tasks for which various characteristics and skills are required and for which certain knowledge is important. Examples of these characteristics and skills can be found in Table 1. It is also important that the supervisor is available to the professionals and always considers the effect of the professional’s actions on the client. The following quotes illustrate what professionals, supervisors and trainers think with regard to the required competencies:

“Whether people feel safe with someone and aren’t afraid to say stupid things. Whether someone is approachable, really, as a supervisor. It’s good if there are no barriers. That you’re not afraid to call: yes, I totally blew it, what should I do now?” (systemic intervention therapist).

“As a supervisor, you have to be really good at coaching therapists, teaching them to stay true to the model and ensuring that they become better at what they do” (systemic intervention supervisor).

“As a supervisor, you have to be on top of the material and the know-how. Not only with regard to intervention, but also in terms of group dynamics. If you can’t get on top of it, you’re not worth anything to the group as a supervisor” (youth training coach).

Figure 1. Examples of supervisor competencies^b

Tasks:	Characteristics	Skills:	Knowledge/experience of:
<i>With regard to professionals</i>	(Treatment) integrity	Broad perspective	The intervention
Building relationships	Open	Analytical skills	Group dynamics
Promoting learning process/reflection	Positive	Listening skills	Video feedback
Positive reinforcement	Respectful	Communication skills	Role-play
Providing feedback	Stable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Asking questions 	Reflection tools
Transferring knowledge	Directive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fine-tuning questions 	
Modelling	Solution-oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitoring 	
Motivating	Flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflecting feelings 	
<i>With regard to the intervention:</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Summarising 	
Monitoring treatment integrity/quality of implementation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concluding 	
Promoting treatment integrity		Feedback skills	
Promoting intervention/supporting the quality system			
<i>With regard to the group process:</i>			
Creating a safe learning environment			
Supervising group process			
Maintaining structure			
Tailoring to beginners and experienced participants			
Encouraging active participation			
Engaging the whole group			
Handling resistance			

^b The examples of competencies come from the ‘Who helps the care provider’ (*Wie helpt de hulpverlener?*) and are taken from the as yet unpublished update of the book (see source number 3) written in response to the project.

2.4 Job requirements

Job requirements can be based on the prior education, work experience and the competences that are important for the supervisor. Depending on the intervention and target group, specific requirements may be added to this. If, for example, a supervisor supervises systemic therapists, knowledge of and experience with a behavioural and systematic approach to youth problems and family systems is important.

2.5 Job application

Internal and/or external parties may apply for the job, after which job interviews are held. If it concerns a complex position, the use of an assessment is recommended. For a systemic intervention that demands a lot from the supervisor role, an assessment can be used, for example, to test supervisors on their problem-solving ability, conflict management, integrity and decisiveness.

Effective Reflection

The supervisors in the Effective Reflection project have at least completed a relevant bachelor programme and a training programme in the intervention in question. They also have some work experience in this intervention or relevant work experience in a similar field. Figure 1 provides guidelines for the competencies according to which the supervisors were selected. The prior education, work experience and competences formed the job requirements for supervisors. This project did not involve a job application procedure.

3. Training

3.1 In the intervention on which they provide supervision

As stated above, it is both useful and important that supervisors are trained in the intervention and have some work experience with that intervention.

3.2. In providing supervision

A training programme³ for the provision of supervision for a specific intervention is strongly recommended. Supervisors can receive such training by the licensee of the intervention or by the institution at which the intervention is performed. Sometimes the supervisor training takes place alongside the training in the intervention, and sometimes this does not happen until the supervisor has gained several years of work experience as a therapist or trainer. It is also possible that the supervisor starts working as a supervisor after the first day of training. After or alongside the training, there must be structured support for supervisors.

3.2.1 Aim of training

The aim of the supervisor training programme is to prepare the student for being a supervisor. For example, during training, the supervisor learns how supervision can be organised and the supervisor is prepared for his/her (new) role. In other words: the aim of the training programme is to provide the supervisor with the required knowledge and skills. Proper training of supervisors ensures high-quality supervision, which ultimately contributes to proper implementation of the intervention.

3.2.2 Duration/frequency of training

The duration/frequency of training depends on the seriousness of the supervisor's task, the intervention and the target group. Training programmes for supervisors of complex/intensive interventions last six to ten days, sometimes spread over a number of years. In addition to these training days, there is extensive support of supervisors.

³ This document expressly refers to the training as a supervisor for a specific intervention and *not* to (more general) training such as post-bachelor training as a supervisor/coach.

Training for supervisors of less complex/intensive interventions is shorter, usually one or two days, spread over multiple half-day sessions or with a period in between.

3.2.3 Number of participants in training

Ideally, supervisor training takes place in groups, but this is not always possible. This means training can also be provided to one or two supervisors. If there is a group, a small group of three to eight participants is preferred.

3.2.4 Content of training programme

The content of the training programme of the supervisor depends on the experience, knowledge and skills of the supervisor in question. During the supervisor's training, the following subjects may be addressed:

- The tasks/responsibilities of the supervisor
- The knowledge and skills of a supervisor, such as:
 - Supervising the group process
 - Providing video and other feedback
 - Using role-play
- Providing supervision, the structure of a supervision session
- The changing role, from implementer to supervisor
- The intervention and the quality control system
- The ability to assess quality and possibilities for improvement
- Providing supervision in line with the intervention
- The difference between individual and group supervision

Examples of questions that may be asked during supervisor training are:

- How do you build a good collaborative relationship?
- How do you ask professionals questions?
- On what do you base your feedback?
- How do you provide positive feedback?
- How do you give professionals points for development?
- How do you get professionals moving?

- How do you assign homework?
- How do you help a team to work as well as possible in accordance with the intervention?
- How do you deal with different levels?
- How do you structure team discussions?
- How do you deal with resistance?

3.2.5 Training procedure/methods

Supervisor training programmes involve both passive and active methods. Passive methods are:

- Theory, for example using PowerPoints
- Watching example videos

Active methods are:

- Modelling⁴
- Practising based on role-play
- Feedback on role-play
- Video feedback

Tools for the supervisor can also be used (see Section 4.4).

3.3 How to work with a reflection tool for treatment integrity

When working with a reflection tool for treatment integrity, the supervisor must also be trained in this area. A supervisor can receive training in scoring treatment integrity and converting such a score into learning points for the professional. If no reflection tool is available, the steps in the ‘Developing a reflection tool’² manual are followed.

3.4. Certification and recertification

It is possible to certify or recertify the supervisor, for example after the training programme or after successfully completing an initial period as a supervisor. Such certification or recertification may be subject to certain requirements, such as taking part in support sessions and refresher sessions for supervisors. There may also be an assessment on the basis of video images.

⁴ Modelling is observational learning. By watching someone else demonstrate certain behaviour or a certain attitude, people can learn how to use this behaviour/attitude themselves.

More information on certification and recertification can be found in the revised edition of the book, *Leren op de Werkvloer* (Learning in the Workplace). Layout and contents of *Leren op de Werkvloer*³.

Effective Reflection

The supervisors receive supervisor training as part of the 'Effective Reflection: reference for quality control in youth care' project. This is organised by the institutions together and given by an expert on supervision with video feedback and role-play. The aim of the training is to clarify the form and content of the supervision, with special attention for the use of video images and role-play. There will also be attention paid to supervisors' skills. The training programme lasts sixteen hours, spread over two successive eight-hour sessions. A total of seven supervisors will take part in the training programme. During the training programme, participants will actively practice with video images and role-play. There will be a separate session concerning the reflection tool for professionals used during the supervision sessions. There is no certification or recertification.

4. Support

4.1 Structural support sessions for supervisors

Supervisors should receive support in carrying out their tasks. This support can take various forms. Support may take place individually or in groups; support sessions may be organised for supervisors and run by a head-supervisor (supervisor-trainer), or supervisors can make arrangements with each other; support can take place within the organisation itself or with supervisors from other organisations, and support may be structural or on request. In the case of some interventions, support for new supervisors is compulsory, but they can request support if and when necessary as they gain more experience.

A head-supervisor explains: *“We made it structural, to start out with. But now it is more on request. So if they encounter something, they call me right away”* (head supervisor youth training programme). This means that it is good if the head-supervisor is available (by telephone) for questions from supervisors. If supervisors make arrangements with each other, it can be useful if they have the opportunity to invite experts (on supervision or the intervention) who provide more substantive depth. Besides support sessions, booster sessions for supervisors may be organised.

4.1.1 Aim of support for supervisors

Support of supervisors serves several purposes. First, support of supervisors is intended to coach the supervisor in and provide reference points for his/her tasks as a supervisor, to promote reflection by the supervisor on his/her own development and to share and learn from the experiences of other supervisors. In addition, supporting supervisors is intended to promote the treatment integrity of the supervisor and to safeguard the quality of the supervision.

4.1.2 Duration/frequency of support for supervisors

The frequency of support of supervisors usually varies from weekly, to every six weeks to quarterly. Supervisors of complex/intensive interventions and new supervisors require the most support, for example, every two weeks, every three weeks, or one to two hours per month. In some cases, these supervisors receive both individual and group support. The degree of support decreases as the supervisor gains more experience or in the case of a less complex and/or intensive intervention. For these supervisors, for example, four to eight support sessions may be

organised per year, sometimes involving telephone support. Booster sessions usually take place annually. If there is no structural support for supervisors, at least a regular booster session should be organised.

4.1.3 Number of participants in support for supervisors

Generally, the number of supervisors participating in support sessions varies from two to eight. These can be both new and experienced supervisors: new supervisors can learn from experienced supervisors, and experienced supervisors can be brought up to date by new supervisors.

4.1.4 Content of support for supervisors

Support sessions for supervisors can concern methodical practice, the progress of the supervisors, the progress of the professionals who support the supervisors, and the clients of these professionals. There may also be room for emotional support and practical matters can be covered. Six subjects are briefly explained below.

- Methodical practice: support sessions for supervisors may concern the intervention and the supervisor's skills in this context. A possible theme is how the supervisor can address the key elements of the intervention in the supervision.
- Progress of supervisor: besides the intervention, support sessions for supervisors may concern the development of the supervisors, what issues they encounter, what goes well and how things could be improved. *“The head supervisor looks at my own performance, how do you design the supervision, how do you give feedback, can you make adjustments in that [...] The support you receive as a supervisor really concerns your knowledge, but also how you use it and how you do that”* (systemic intervention supervisor). If supervisors work as therapists or trainers in addition to being supervisors, the support may also focus on this.
- Progress of professionals: supervision sessions for supervisors may also concern the progress of the professionals who support the supervisors. *“Keep looking at how things are going with that team. What are that therapist's strengths, in what areas does she*

have room to learn and how could I approach this. How do I implement this in the supervision? You have to keep thinking about it.” (systemic intervention supervisor). This clearly involves a parallel with the reflection of professionals on the progress of clients, which is part of the supervision. In addition, it may concern how to support the professionals and how to give them feedback. *“And you really discuss substantively how you can respond substantively to a team member or to a young person [...] That’s part of it, too. Team members, young people, everything really, you check everything you do and receive advice and recommendations on it”* (systemic interventions supervisor).

- Progress of client: support sessions for supervisors may also concern substantive matters with regard to the client, such as dangerous family situations. This occurs mainly in complex/intensive interventions, where the supervisor's supporter shares responsibility with the supervisor.
- Emotional support: support sessions for supervisors may also include time for emotional support. Supervisors can then exchange thoughts on difficult issues.
- Practical matters: finally, support of supervisors may concern practical matters, such as developments within the organisation.

The content of the support sessions changes according to the experience of the supervisors. *“At first, we all still had more questions about [scoring video images] [...] That’s getting less: it changes the longer we’ve worked there”* (parenting training supervisor). The agenda is partly determined by the participating supervisors. *“We can determine a lot of what we want to address ourselves, so you have the chance to bring up difficult situations or questions about the [intervention] that you can’t figure out yourself”* (parenting training supervisor).

4.1.5 Approach/methods in support for supervisors

The main method used during support sessions for supervisors is ‘discuss and ask questions’. For example, questions are asked by the supporter and there is room for questions from the supervisor. *“[The supporter] of course also sees things that aren’t going well and thinks: hey, I*

want to focus on that [...] but if I have a question myself and think: [...] what do I do with that? Then you really discuss that with each other” (systemic intervention supervisor). The participants also reflect and provide feedback together. “[The supporter] forces you to reflect continuously: what are you actually doing, what’s the goal? And to evaluate continuously [...] it doesn’t matter whether you do that at client level, team level or about your own performance, you keep doing the same thing and that really helps because it’s always about: how do I act, what’s my goal?” (systemic intervention supervisor). In addition, the supporter of the supervisor acts as a model and there is practice (e.g. with methods) by means of role-play. For some interventions, supporters of supervisors may sometimes monitor them, for example through a one-way screen or by providing supervision together.

Support sessions for supervisors may also involve video feedback and other tools for supervisors (see Section 4.4). Sometimes there is a fixed format according to which the support session for supervisors is organised. For a certain intervention, for example, two video recordings are contributed for each support session. A different supervisor takes on the role of manager for each contribution. The supporter then joins in as a participant. “We either contribute images from a recorded group supervision, or from an individual supervision – that’s also possible. And that varies. In principle you are [either the contributor] or you lead a contribution [...] in order to get yet more feedback in this way on how you do it” (parenting training supervisor).

4.2 Supervisor of supervisors

In most cases, a head supervisor or trainer supports the supervisors. The supporter of supervisors focuses on promoting the expertise of the supervisors, helps the supervisors and contributes ideas, has a positive attitude and treats supervisors in a positive manner. A supervisor explains: “It’s very much strength-oriented and it’s very open [...] there’s no judgement about: you do it well or you do it badly [...] but more direction: what are your strengths and what do you need in order to express them? Based on [the intervention], of course, that’s always in the background” (systemic intervention supervisor). The supporter also always works according to the key elements of the intervention. It is also useful if supporters are able to identify patterns, analyse, solve quickly in terms of the principles of the intervention, encourage reflection and provide clear feedback to supervisors.

4.3 Booster sessions for supervisors

Booster sessions are organised by the head supervisor and often take place with supervisors from various institutions. Booster sessions are provided, in addition to an extensive support system for supervisors, in the case of complex/intensive interventions. The frequency varies from annually to two or four times a year. Refresher sessions concern matters such as developments in the intervention and providing supervision. *“It’s more about my attitude, am I supportive, how often is supervision provided, whether the different forms of supervision are provided [...] It’s not just about: how are you feeling? [But also about the supervision you provide]”* (systemic intervention supervisor). For a particular systemic intervention, the supervisors bring video recordings and a question to the refresher sessions. For less complex/intensive interventions, refresher sessions only take place when there is no support for supervisors. These sessions can provide a follow-up to the supervisor training. So in that case, it is really concerns follow-up training in which the tasks of the supervisor are addressed in greater depth. Theory is discussed and practised, for example with methods for supervision that fit with the intervention.

4.4 Tools for supervisors

There are a variety of tools that can help supervisors when providing supervision:

- A manual for supervisors, which is particularly useful for new supervisors.
- A reflection tool for the treatment integrity of the professionals. This can also be used for the support of supervisors, to determine whether the supervision is consistent with the intervention.
- A checklist for the treatment integrity of the supervisors themselves. This can be completed by the supervisor himself/herself or by the supporter of the supervisor, and helps the supervisor to reflect on how he/she functions. For example, by identifying strengths and weaknesses.
- Video recordings of the supervision, so that video feedback can be used during the support sessions for supervisors.

Effective Reflection

The supervisors receive three group support sessions as part of the Effective Reflection project. The tools used are a guide for supervisors on providing supervision with video feedback and

role-play¹, a reflection tool geared to interventions² and a checklist for supervisors. If desired, a supervisor may make recordings of the supervision and contribute these during the support sessions.

5. Sources

The content of this manual is based on knowledge gained in the ‘Who helps the care provider?’ (*Wie helpt de hulpverlener?*) project and information from Child protection services Amsterdam (*Jeugdbescherming Regio Amsterdam*). ‘Who helps the care provider?’ was a collaborative project of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences research group Implementation and Effectiveness in Youth Care Services and the organisations, Altra Education & Youth Care (Altra Onderwijs & Jeugdhulp), and Spirit Youth Care & Parenting Support (Spirit Jeugd & Opvoedhulp). The project resulted in a practical guide⁶ and a toolkit⁷ from which the content has been incorporated in this manual. Child protection services Amsterdam already has a lot of information and expertise in working with video recordings and role-play in supervision. This information and expertise⁸⁻¹⁴ has been combined and incorporated in this manual.

The sources used are listed below, following the numbering in the text.

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Colophon

This manual is the English version of a Dutch manual, developed by the research group Implementation and Effectiveness in Youth Care Services in collaboration with Altra Education & Youth Care (*Altra Onderwijs & Jeugdhulp*), Child protection services Amsterdam (*Jeugdbescherming Regio Amsterdam*) and Spirit Youth Care & Parenting Support (*Spirit Jeugd & Opvoedhulp*). This manual is part of the project, ‘Effective Reflection: reference for quality control in youth care’ and could not have been developed without the contributions of all parties involved in the project. We would like to express particular gratitude for the contributions of Mirjam Bekker and Titia de Jong.

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