

Supervision

What is supervision, and why is it important?

When we talk about GBV case management, supervision is never optional. It is through good, consistent/regular and intentional supervision that:

- We ensure the services we deliver to survivors are of good quality;
- Case workers can practice and improve their skills;
- Case workers do not burnout or experience secondary trauma;
- Capacity building needs of case workers are identified and acted upon.

Supervision entails a relationship between a case worker and a supervisor- the latter being someone with several years of experience working with survivors- that aims to “support the case worker’s technical competence and practice, promotes wellbeing and enables effective and supportive monitoring of the casework.”¹

Remember! A relationship only works if all those involved participate! That means that good case management supervision can only be successful if both the case worker and the supervisor are invested.

Case management supervision looks at two key aspects of our work:

- Service delivery: Is a case worker providing quality case management? What skills are they using well? What competencies do they need to work on or improve?
- Staff stress and wellbeing: How is a case worker managing their caseload, their emotions and what can be done to support them?

Are there different ways to do supervision? Yes!

There are different ways that supervision can be set-up - although one-on-one supervision is the minimum, it is recommended that a *combination* of these types of supervisions is used. Here are different ways to set up supervision:

- One-on-one: Supervision relies on a relationship between a case worker and a supervisor, so ensuring you have one-on-one time together regularly and consistently is the foundation of good supervision and ultimately good case management. Ideally this would be weekly meetings, but should not be less than once every two weeks.
- Group supervision: Group supervision, also called peer-to-peer support or case management meetings, is a great way to build relationships between case workers, and to create peer support. These meetings are

only for case workers and supervisors. This is not the place to discuss individual case worker performance or detailed individual cases, but is a fantastic way to trouble shoot challenges, share experiences and problem solving, as well as support case workers in understanding they are not alone.

- On-the-job observation and coaching (including case file reviews): Observation is useful as it gives the supervisor a direct opportunity to watch the case worker in action. It is recommended to use the 'Survivor-centered case management quality checklist' or other assessment tools as these provide concrete guidance on what to assess. They also provide the basis on which to debrief with the case worker afterwards. Supervision is about improving skills and supporting a case worker, so make sure this is the approach it. For a supervisor to observe a case worker, remember that consent has to be given by the survivor.
- Regular team meetings: Regular team meetings provide the opportunity to build rapport for case workers with others who are working on GBV, but not on case management. It is a good way to create further support networks and solidarity, as well as create synergies between different parts of one program.

Considerations for Effective Supervision

Effective supervision can only work if:

- Both the supervisor and the case worker are invested in building the relationship. This means:
 - o They must communicate and share both the victories and the challenges. That means that a case worker must be willing to share, ask questions and identify areas for improvement, and the supervisor must provide an environment where sharing challenges is valued, not seen as a weakness.
 - o They must collaborate and problem solve together. This reduces the burden on either of them, and thus reduces stress.
 - o The environment in which supervision takes place must feel safe especially for the case worker. This means that mistakes can be made, criticism is not made but rather being vulnerable is rewarded with support and constructive feedback.
 - o Good practice must be modeled, which means listening, paying attention, demonstrating empathy, working from a strengths-based approach and seeing this as an opportunity for empowerment are practiced.
 - o Content of the meetings must be kept confidential on both sides. This is also essential in building the relationship that is at the heart of good supervision.
- It is regular and consistent. Working on GBV is hard work, and so support and coaching must be done regularly to sustain motivation and performance. Ideally, this means that a case worker and their supervisor meet at least once a week at a regular time.

How to make individual supervision a success?

Individual supervision can be one-on-one meetings as well as observation and coaching (including case file reviews). To make either of these approaches a success, there are several things that both a case worker and a supervisor can do:

- Organize regular and consistent meetings/observations, and do not cancel them. Committing to these is the first way of building trust in the relationship.
- Both the case worker and the supervisor should prepare.
 - o For the case worker: Think through your caseload, your emotions, and identify questions you may have, challenges you have faced, areas of technical competency you may not be sure about, emotions you may be struggling with. It is your responsibility to bring attention to these otherwise your supervisor cannot support you.
 - o For the supervisor: Prepare by leaving other issues behind you and focusing exclusively on this meeting/observation. It is up to you to make this space a safe one, and to model good practice. Always dedicate time at the beginning and at the end of the meeting to check in with the person, not just the case worker. Have tools prepared (for example the survivor-centered case management quality checklist in the GBV Case Management Guidelines), key points for discussion, as well as a refresher on your previous meeting in case there are points to follow-up on.
- Come to the meetings seeking solutions and constructive feedback. Use them as an opportunity to learn, to grow and to share burdens.
- There exist three capacity building tools to be apply with the case worker every three months to know more about where they need support (attitude skills, knowledge tools and skills building tools)

Given the nature of the work, case workers may need ad hoc or emergency support at any time! A survivor may be in immediate danger for example, in which case a supervisor must be available to provide support and coaching. Ad hoc or emergency support must not replace regular and consistent supervision.

Approaches to Group/Peer Supervision

Group supervision, also referred to as peer supervision or case management meetings- brings together case workers and supervisor(s) on a regular basis, and create the space for case workers to talk about the work, share information, experiences and problems². These must be set-up so that case workers can both share what is going with them but also garner information on strategies or approaches that others have used that have been successful. Once again, this type of supervision seeks to both provide case workers with tools and learning opportunities as well as a forum for support.

Remember! Because this type of supervision involves many people, survivor safety and confidentiality must be maintained at all times.

Specific characteristics of group supervision:

- These should be regular and consistent, but do not need to be held more than once a month.
- These should always include time for checking in with case workers on their wellbeing.
- These need to be prepared by supervisors in advance, including with specific case workers if a particular case or challenging situation will be discussed. There are different ways to set these meetings up:
 - Case reviews: These can either be about a real or hypothetical case that presented specific challenges, that different case workers have managed differently, or that are a good opportunity for learning.
 - Topical sessions: These focus on specific technical topics that have been identified either by supervisors or case workers as challenging or requiring a deep dive.
 - Teach back: Supervisors should use successes and strengths of case workers to provide teaching moments to others.
 - Case discussion, role play



¹ Inter-Agency Child Protection Case Management Supervision and Coaching Training Package

² Inter-Agency GBV Case Management Guidelines, <https://gbvresponders.org/response/gbv-case-management/>