

Kadushin's Model of Child Welfare Supervision

Alfred Kadushin, a pioneer in social work supervision, conceptualized casework supervision as consisting of three functional roles: administrative, educational, and supportive supervision. (Potter & Brittain, 2009)

- **Administrative Supervision** “focuses on the efficient and effective delivery of services to achieve agency goals.” It is “planning, executing, monitoring, and evaluating activities to accomplish the work of the agency through the staff.” (Colorado DHS Standards)
- Examples of administrative supervision include:
 - Aligning the unit’s work with the agency’s and unit’s mission
 - Creating and maintaining an effective and efficient organizational structure
 - Ensuring that unit processes and procedures are designed to facilitate performance of work activities
 - Appropriate implementation of legislation, rules, procedures
 - Addressing organizational/systemic barriers to staff performance
 - Work planning and coordination; decision making
 - Monitoring and evaluating work
 - Acting as advocate, administrative buffer, change agent
- **Educational Supervision** educates staff “for a more knowledgeable and skilled performance of tasks.” It includes the activities designed to “help caseworkers learn what they need to know to do their jobs effectively.” (Colorado DHS Standards)
- Examples of educational supervision include:
 - Reducing knowledge and skill barriers to staff performance and outcome achievement
 - Identifying training needs and implementing individual development plans for coaching and mentoring, on-the-job training, etc.
 - Developing confident, competent, and committed staff

- **Supportive Supervision** “provides support, sustenance, and motivation” to staff to improve their performance. It is “creating a psychological and physical climate that enables staff to feel positive about the job, including showing concern and empathy toward individuals.” (Colorado DHS Standards)
- Examples of supportive supervision include:
 - Creating a safe, comfortable, and empowering environment that promotes high levels of caseworker performance
 - Reducing psychological or emotional barriers to caseworker performance and outcome achievement
 - Helping caseworkers develop confidence and realistic perspectives about the work, and deal with job-related stress and personal reactions to the work
 - Addressing the cultural issues that impact casework practice and caseworkers’ perception of clients
 - Providing positive reinforcement for effective performance
- Supervisors often find that they spend too much of their time on administrative responsibilities.
- Kadushin, however, believed social work supervision was like that of a three-legged stool. Each supervisory function is essential to effective supervision. Together, the three components provide a unifying framework for supervision; each ‘leg,’ or supervisory function, is distinct and necessary, and complements the other legs. “Balance is everything; if one leg of the stool is broken or uneven, then the whole stool will falter and come crashing to the ground.” (Potter & Brittain, 2009)
- The three supervisory components are not mutually exclusive. For example, in reviewing a case record, supervisors have an administrative focus when they look for rules compliance; they have an educational focus when they identify areas requiring additional caseworker instruction and ensure that caseworkers acquire the necessary knowledge or skill; and they have a supportive focus when they provide positive reinforcement of good practice.
- Supervisors cannot simply react to the demands of the job; they must proactively engage in a balance of all three functions of supervision to be effective.