Supervising Paraprofessionals: I Can Handle the Students, But What About the Adults?!
Disclosure

• I have the following relevant financial relationship:
  • I am supported by the ND Department of Public Instruction in this presentation

• I have the following non-financial relationships:
  • I am a faculty member in the Department of Communication Disorders at Minot State University.
  • I am an accreditation site visitor for the Council on Academic Accreditation (ASHA affiliate).
Learner Outcomes

The successful participant will be able to

• Explain how paraprofessionals can play a critical role on successful student learning teams

• Use techniques for effective communication and resolving conflicts in supervision

• Learn and apply the knowledge and skills needed to engage in effective supervision including interviewing, scheduling, documentation, evaluation, and self-assessment related to supervision of paraprofessionals
Today’s Focus:
Starting the year on the right foot with your paraprofessionals
Supervision might be a BIG CHANGE for you

CHANGE IS THE LAW OF LIFE
AND THOSE WHO LOOK ONLY TO
THE PAST OR PRESENT
ARE CERTAIN TO MISS
THE FUTURE

John F. Kennedy

celebquote.com
“Life is like underwear, change is good.”
Chances are...you learned very little about supervision in college?
Reflection on Supervision

• When you graduated from college, what did you know about supervising other “adults”?

• What have you learned on the job about supervision?

• What would you like to learn about supervision?
First Step in the Change Process:

• Becoming informed.
ND Law re: Paraprofessionals & Supervision

ND Administrative Rules

67-11-14 (Para Certificate of Completion)
67-11-20 (SLP Paraprofessionals)
67-11- [9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19] (Education Professionals Credential)
Wide variety of knowledge and skills among paraprofessionals:

- Bachelor’s degree in teaching/education
- Bachelor’s degree in “something else”
- Associate’s degree
- Completed para training
- High school education
How will you gain an understanding of your paraprofessionals’ knowledge base?

ASK THEM
Point to Ponder:

Would you rather have a para who has an associates degree or para training or a bachelor’s degree in education?
Supervisor Self-Rating of Supervisory Competency

Be familiar with the literature on supervision and the impact of supervisor behaviors on the growth and development of the supervisee.

Recognize that planning and goal setting are critical components of the supervisory process both for the clinical care provided to the client by the supervisee and for the professional growth of the supervisee.

Understand the value of different observation formats to benefit supervisee growth and development.

Understand the importance of implementing a supervisory style that corresponds to the knowledge and skill level of the supervisee.

Understand the basic principles and dynamics of effective collaboration.

Be familiar with data collection methods and tools for analysis of clinical behaviors.

Understand types and uses of technology and their application in supervision.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills:</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>?</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate an understanding of the supervisory process that includes the objectives of supervision, the roles of the participants, the components of the supervisory process, and a clear description of the assigned tasks and responsibilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist the supervisee in formulating goals for the clinical and supervisory processes, as needed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess the supervisee's knowledge, skills, and prior experiences in relationship to the clients served.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt or develop observational formats that facilitate objective data collection.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be able to select and apply a supervisory style based on the needs of the clients served, and the knowledge and skill of the supervisee.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model effective collaboration and communication skills in interdisciplinary teams.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be able to analyze the data collected to facilitate the supervisee's clinical skill development and professional growth.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use technology as appropriate to enhance communication effectiveness and efficiency in the supervisory process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

https://www.nd.gov/dpi/SchoolStaff/SpecialEd/Paraprofessional/
special educators + teachers + para + family = TEAM

IMAGINE THE POTENTIAL!!
10 Things Every Paraprofessional Wishes You Knew (Austin, 2014, Virginia Dept of Ed)

1. There are laws and regulations that impact me.

2. I am responsible for many roles and responsibilities.

3. I need a written job description specific to your classroom.

4. I need you to structure the environment for me to be successful.

5. I need you to support me in my role as a paraprofessional.
10 Things Every Paraprofessional Wishes You Knew  (Austin, 2014)

6. I need direct supervision.

7. I need orientation to my specific roles and responsibilities as a paraprofessional.

8. I need on-the-job training to learn new skills.

9. I need direct, regular communication.

10. I need you to facilitate conflict resolution within our team.
Need to have **clarity** from *Day One*

- The degree that providers
  - understand their own role and the roles of those in other professions,
  - and use this knowledge appropriately to establish and *achieve students’ goals*.

*Evans, 2016*
Day One = the INTERVIEW

a. Be included!
b. Formulate questions in advance.
c. Consider applicant’s knowledge of
   • Teaching and learning
   • Strategies
   • Para responsibilities
d. Consider applicant’s “livability”
Para must be a part of the team, not someone who completes a list of tasks.
Task-based vs. Role-based Service Delivery
(Evans, 2016)

• Task
  • An assigned piece of work finished within a certain time
  • Something hard or unpleasant that has to be done
  • Work given to someone
  • A job for someone to do

• Role
  • A part someone has in:
    • A situation or activity
    • A family, society, or other group
  • A socially-expected behavior pattern
Task vs. Role

• “Task” Synonyms
  • Assignment
  • Duty
  • Chore
  • Job

• “Role” Synonyms
  • Capacity
  • Function
  • Part
  • Place
  • Position
  • Purpose
  • Work
What does this look like?

• Task Lister
  • Sees their job as “less than”
  • Disengaged
  • Unmotivated

• Member of the TEAM
  • Expected to “use their brain”
  • Make and act on decisions
  • Working with the IEP
  • Valued
  • Know their role: when to ask, consult, question
Para’s Roles in Role-based Paradigm

1. Assistant in Service Provision
   • Provide goal-oriented services to students, families, and teachers
   • Teach, consult, document, observe
   • Demonstrate effective problem solving
Para’s Role in this Paradigm

2. **Collaborator**
   - Work effectively with the team
   - Establish and maintain partnerships to achieve optimal services
   - Prevent and resolve inter-professional conflict
Para’s Roles in this Paradigm

3. Life-long Learner
   • Maintain and improve knowledge, skills & attitudes
   • Participate in reflective practice, staff development, self-directed learning
   • Act as a resource & mentor to others
Team Members Have Overlapping Yet Distinct Roles
Our responsibility in establishing the Para as part of the team

• Include Para in treatment planning (IEP meetings, team meetings, etc)
  • This is where the WHOLE TEAM gets clear on roles

• CLEAR, CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION
Competence comes from really good conversations and listening.
Clear, Continuous Communication

1. Para’s background knowledge:
   • What do they feel their competencies and weaknesses are?
   • Discuss educational background.
   • Make a learning plan.
Clear, Continuous Communication

2. **Ask questions of an evaluative nature**
   - Why do you think this is happening?
   - What do you think you need from me to support the intervention?
   - What are the student’s strengths that made that work?

   • Get the para fully engaged in the interventions and using her brain!
Clear, Continuous Communication

- Talk about the practice of teaching and learning.
- Talk about how you do things.
- Talk about how they do things.
- Ups and downs.
- Different approaches to different situations.
You must be willing to learn from the Paraprofessional.
What can I learn?

• The para perspective
• What’s working/not
• “Boots on the ground” stuff
What the Para Learns from YOU

- What is/not good teaching
- What is an IEP and how is it used
- Students’ goals
- Differences in roles and overlap
So what does the process of building a competent team look like?
CONVERSATIONS

Assign Responsibilities

Monitor & Assess

Celebrate

Self-assessment

Process for Providing Feedback
Have the important conversations before the school year begins...
Step 1: Self-assessment

Para Self-assessment:
1. Background
2. Understanding of Para’s role
3. Understanding of Teacher’s role
4. Strengths
5. Weaknesses
6. Learning needs

Teacher/supervisor’s Self-assessment
Share your self-assessments with each other.

• Sets stage for clear, continuous communication.
• Basis for goal setting.
Step 2: Discuss how feedback will be provided.

CONVERSATIONS
- Assign Responsibilities
- Monitor & Assess
- Self-assessment
- Celebrate

Process for Providing Feedback
Providing Feedback to the Paraprofessional

Formative & Summative Assessment
Formative Assessment: Ongoing learning for improvement

• Verbal & Written Feedback
  • When? Why?
  • How?
Competency-based Formative Assessment

• Have the supervisee rate her competencies
• You rate the supervisee
• Discuss any discrepancies
• Make a plan for improvement
## Communication/Collaboration Self-Evaluation Checklist

(Virginia Dept of Education, 2002)

education.wm.edu/centers/ttac/documents/packets/teacherstools.pdf

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Rating 1-3</th>
<th>How can improvements be made in this area?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher has a clearly defined role for me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher has checked that I understand my role.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know the school district and state guidelines regarding paraeducator roles.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher has established clear priorities for student learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher has communicated these priorities to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher understands my preferred work style.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular time is set aside to meet and plan with my teacher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I encourage respectful and beneficial relationships between families and professionals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I encourage and assist individual students and their...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summative Assessment

• Annual Evaluation
  • Who will complete?
  • How will you have input?

• ND DPI Paraeducator Evaluation Report
Steps 3 & 4: Assigning & Monitoring Para’s Responsibilities

- Self-assessment
- Celebrate
- Monitor & Assess
- Assign Responsibilities
- Process for Providing Feedback
Scheduling

• Work TOGETHER.

• Determine
  • Who (students, teachers)
  • When (students, teachers, supervising special ed)
  • How will changes be handled
    • Para absences
    • Special educator absences
Monitoring: Make a plan BEFORE the para ever sees a student

• Para’s input is critical—
  • Ask what she needs for monitoring
    • Frequency of communication
    • Review of data
    • Asking more questions
At regular MONITORING meetings:

• Evaluation of assignments
  • Performance of the assigned activity
  • Outcomes for the student
Progression in Supervisee’s Learning (Adams, 2015)

- Unconsciously incompetent
  - don’t know what I don’t know

- Consciously incompetent
  - aware of learning needs

- Consciously competent
  - able to carry out the activity with planning and thought

- Unconsciously competent
  - I could do this in my sleep
Plans for Improvement

When Problems Arise
Tips on Managing Conflict  (McCready, 2007)

- Listen without interrupting. Ask that the other person try to do the same.
- Count to 5 silently before responding (grow calm, listen to yourself, feel whatever you’re feeling).
- Beware of slipping into avoiding, attacking, or defending.
- View conflict as a research project rather than a war.
Tips on Managing Conflict  (McCready, 2007)

• Let go of the need to be right.

• Separate facts from feelings and opinions.

• Remember that you do not know what the other person feels or thinks.

• Remember that you have no control over the person’s response.

• Use “I” statements.
When things aren’t going well...

1. Say what you see.
2. Say what you need to see.
3. WAIT.
   *Whoever talks first owns the problem.*
4. Develop a plan.

(adapted from Macdonald, 2000)
“Say what you see, say what you need to see, wait.” ...then come up with a **PLAN**.

- Expect Para to own it and use her brain
  - Ask questions
  - Come up with a new plan

Take time to have an **aha moment**.
Setting Para Goals & Learning Plans

• Services-based: what do you want to learn or improve in order to provide better service to students?

• Derived from para’s and supervisor’s assessment
  • Strengths and Needs
Para’s Learning Plan

1. Measurable goals.
2. Objectives to reach the goal.
3. Strategies and activities to reach goal.
4. Timeline.
5. Resources (including what supervisor will do).
Example Para Learning Plan

**Identified Need:** I want to improve my collaboration skills with teachers. (currently rarely talks with classroom teachers about students’ learning)

**Goal:**

**Strategies:**

**Timeline:**

**Resources:**
A COMPETENT TEAM

CONVERSATIONS

Self-assessment

Assign Responsibilities

Monitor & Assess

Process for Providing Feedback

Celebrate
GOAL in creating a collaborative supervisor/supervisee TEAM:

- You say “we” and mean it.
- You feel you’ve learned from your supervisee and can tell her so.
- You’re not afraid to say, “You’re right; I was wrong.”
- The supervisee solves a problem with little or no input from you.
- You accept the supervisee’s input as important as your own.
- You are able to work jointly on the supervisee’s performance evaluation.

(McCrea & Brasseur, 2003)
Team Building, Communication & Problem Solving

“If you want people with you when you land, they have to be with you when you take off.”

http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/CSPD/Para/ParaGuide.pdf, p. 47
None of us is as smart as all of us.

- Kenneth H. Blanchard
MAKE THIS YEAR SO AWESOME LAST YEAR GETS JEALOUS!
Thank you!
leisa.harmon@minotstateu.edu
Resources


• Evans, J. (2016). Communication Health Assistants: Pure Potential! Presentation to SAC.OAC.


• Herd, C. & Cohn T. (2009). Constructing and maintaining appropriate boundaries within clinical supervision relationships. ASHA SIG 11 Perspectives, 19, 30-35.


