

Trauma-Informed Supervision: Principles and Opportunities

Principle 1: Safety (Emotional and Physical)
Create a safe and welcoming environment Opportunity: Be clear about providing a safe/brave space for staff to voice their concerns and ideas.
Be consistent and predictable Opportunity: Set regular meeting times and inform your staff what the meeting is about so that they can come prepared.
Non-shaming, non-blaming, non-violent Opportunity: Address staff concerns privately (rather than in a group setting). Focus on solutions, rather than the problem.
Ensure privacy and confidentiality Opportunity: Maintain confidentiality with individual staff members, but also be clear about when you may have to share information with HR or others.
Provide clear expectations about what is happening and why Opportunity: When policies and/or processes change, explain to staff why those changes have been implemented.
Principle 2: Collaboration and Mutuality
Ensure respect, connection, and hope Opportunity: Regularly check-in with staff (ex: “Hi, how are you? Just checking in to see if there is anything you need from me.”).
Recognize that healing occurs in the context of the interpersonal relationship Opportunity: Set aside time to debrief with staff after major incidents and or complex cases.
Shared decision-making Opportunity: Support staff on decisions in complex client cases.
Level power differences between staff and clients by creating true partnering Opportunity: Listen to staff ideas and support these changes when possible. Advocate on behalf of your team with leadership.
Everyone has a role to play in trauma-informed approach from reception to direct medical care Opportunity: Include front non-programmatic staff in training opportunities.
Principle 3: Trustworthiness and Transparency
Build and maintain trust among staff, clients, and family members of those served Opportunity: Be transparent with staff (ex: explaining why you’re rescheduling a meeting).
Maintain professional boundaries Opportunity: Explain professional boundaries to staff, and do so early on.
Ensure policies and processes are transparent Opportunity: Review policies & procedures with staff & ensure they understand, encouraging them to ask questions.
Ensure roles are clear Opportunity: Be clear about who is responsible for what and in what timeframe, especially on collaborative projects.
Have an informed consent and grievance process Opportunity: Make processes accessible in both language and physical placement.

Principle 4: Empowerment, Voice and Choice	
Validate strengths & resilience	Opportunity: Celebrate individual staff success with clients.
Use strengths to build & enhance healthy coping skills	Opportunity: Learn your staff's self-care strategies and encourage staff to use them.
Understand past coping mechanisms & normalcy of the response to a not normal situation	Opportunity: Do not shame staff for mishandling a situation; rather use it as a teaching opportunity.
Apply strengths-based perspective	Opportunity: These questions will help in learning more about your staff: 1) What do you enjoy most in your day to day work activities? 2) What part of your role is the most exciting to you and why? or 3) What are some of your professional goals? How can I support?
Value social roles	Opportunity: Understand and value that staff have other social roles to fulfill outside of work (ex: allowing a staff member come in late, so they can attend their child's event at school).
Increase and ensure individual control & autonomy	Opportunity: Give staff choices when scheduling meetings.
Frame experiences of survivorship, not victimization	Opportunity: Ensure that you are modeling a strengths-based perspective and people first language.

Principle 5: Peer Support	
Recognize that peer support and mutual self-help are key vehicles for:	
Establishing safety and hope	Opportunity: Encourage a buddy system to ensure safety when leaving after business hours.
Building Trust	Opportunity: Avoid micromanaging staff to demonstrate you trust them.
Enhance collaboration	Opportunity: Encourage staff to share successes and challenges with one another.
Using stories and lived experience to promote recovery and healing	Opportunity: Hold weekly meetings to discuss complex cases, solicit feedback & learn ways to manage difficult cases.

Principle 6: Cultural, Historical and Gender Factors	
Actively move past cultural stereotypes and biases	Opportunity: Avoid making assumptions about staff and/or clients.
Provide gender responsive services	Opportunity: Encourage staff to include their pronouns in their email signature.
Recognize and address historical traumas	Opportunity: Discuss historical traumas with staff, and recognize possible triggers in the workplace for staff.
Incorporate policies, protocols & processes that are responsive to the racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of individuals served	Opportunity: Create space for learning about the communities staff are a part of.

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