



# Supervision TIPS

Supervision is a helping process designed to support staff members as they work to promote the success of the organization and advance their own career development. Supervision should be collaborative and growth oriented.

> Use the tips and resources on this fact sheet to better understand the supervisor role.



## Common Qualities of Effective Supervisors

Effective supervisors know the ins and outs of their jobs and know how to make things happen. They are respectful, courteous, committed, responsible, and focused on accountability. They communicate well and are champions of their staff, with a focus on developing people's careers and leadership abilities.

## Supervision Styles

A supervisor should understand their own supervision style:

- Autocratic/authoritarian
- Bureaucratic
- Charismatic
- Democratic
- Laissez-faire
- People-oriented
- Task-oriented
- Transactional
- Transformational
- Situational

## Turning Supervisors into Coaches

Here are some fundamental values and elements of mentoring and supervision that, when combined, can maximize the supervisor role.

- Discussing expectations of the relationship from the perspective of the supervisor and supervisee,
- Being alert to boundary issues that can be blurred by mixed roles, and
- Understanding and managing social and gender-based power dynamics.

## Staff Performance Reviews

Evaluation of personnel is a critical task of supervisors and administrators in behavioral health. The goals of evaluations include appraising performance, eliciting learning goals, and providing feedback on adherence to policies, procedures, and values. Learn more tips from this Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP): [TIP 52: Clinical Supervision and Professional Development of the Substance Abuse Counselor](#).



## Supervision TIPS

### Effective Communication

Effective communication is central to successful supervision. Communication skills are critical for everyone who works with clients, consumers, staff, and the community. This article from Mind Tools about the seven stages of the communication process can help supervisors become better communicators and help their staff do the same: [Understanding Communication Skills](#)

---

### Effective Conflict Negotiation

Good supervisors know how to work effectively to resolve conflicts—and even to reap benefits from them—by using conflict resolution techniques. This article from Mind Tools describes how skilled supervisors can benefit from the conflict resolution process through factors such as increased understanding, group collaboration, and self-knowledge among the work team: [Conflict Resolution](#).

---

### Motivating Employees

A supervisor's goal should be to get employees to move forward on their own, without being pushed. One of the best ways to do this is job satisfaction. Employees with challenging work, autonomy, and potential for advancement have more job satisfaction and therefore more self-motivation at work. This video from the [Harvard Business Review](#) explains more.

---

### Team Building

Effective teamwork is integral to the success of the behavioral health workforce. An effective team can help an organization achieve incredible results, whereas a team that is not working well can cause unnecessary disruption and strategic failure. A good guide is following the eight steps outlined in this article from [Indeed](#).

---

### Culturally Competent Supervision

Cultural competence means that one is respectful and inclusive of the health beliefs and attitudes, healing practices, and cultural and linguistic needs of different population groups. Behavioral health practitioners can bring about positive change by improving understanding and ability to work within the differing cultural contexts of various communities. Supervisors can help them get there. SAMHSA's [TIP 59: Improving Cultural Competence](#) has tips for professional care providers and administrators to understand the role of culture in the delivery of substance use and mental health services. It discusses racial, ethnic, and cultural considerations and the core elements of cultural competence.



# Supervision STRATEGIES

*“Remember the difference between a boss and a leader: A boss says, ‘Go!’  
A leader says, ‘Let’s go!’” – E. M. Kelly*

> Use the strategies and resources on this fact sheet to improve the supervisor role.



## Strengthening the Common Qualities of Effective Supervisors

Supervisors must be able to motivate workers to achieve the overall objectives of their organization and communicate top management’s vision and policies to employees.

It is critical that they have a thorough knowledge of their employees’ jobs to earn the respect of those working under them. When others are intimidated or overwhelmed, effective supervisors are highly resourceful, finding innovative ways to draw upon both internal and external resources available to resolve problems and achieve goals.

---

## Supervision Styles

In the 1930s, psychologist Kurt Lewin developed a framework of three major styles of leadership. Good supervisors thoughtfully apply these approaches depending on personal preferences, staff needs, and the situation they are in. Lewin’s framework is popular and useful because it encourages managers to be less autocratic than they might be instinctively.

**Autocratic leaders** make decisions without consulting their team members, even if their input would be useful.

**Democratic leaders** make the final decisions, but they include team members in the decision-making process.

**Laissez-faire** leaders give their team members a lot of freedom in how they do their work and how they set their deadlines.

---

## Turning Supervisors into Coaches

Supervisors are like coaches for a team of workers. Workplace coaching holds tremendous potential for developing more productive, motivated, and satisfied employees. This article explains how it is done: [Workplace Coach: Leading a Team Effectively Takes Special Skills](#).



## Supervision STRATEGIES

### Staff Performance Reviews

The supervisory relationship benefits when the employee has ownership and understanding of the ways they are evaluated. A useful strategy is to involve employees in setting productivity goals and performance standards. This helps employees to know exactly what is expected of them—both in the standards that they set for themselves and those that the organization must maintain. This lets them know how the supervisor decides that someone has done a good job. To learn more, see [Effectively Managing Human Service Organizations](#), by Ralph Brody.

---

### Effective Communication

Having a difficult conversation with someone you supervise can help to build rather than derail your relationship, while still providing the professional feedback required. In the article [How to Hold a Difficult Conversation with an Employee](#), Susan M. Heathfield offers insights to be successful at challenging discussions.

---

### Effective Conflict Negotiation

Conflict negotiation can defuse workplace conflicts before they create an unhealthy environment. Understanding human behavior, paying attention, and using neutrality to resolve the problem can all help. See the article [Can We Call a Truce? Ten Tips for Negotiating Workplace Conflicts](#) for strategies for using negotiation to reframe situations and reach a resolution.

---

### Motivating Employees

A key role of a supervisor is to motivate workers to want to do their best and feel invested in furthering the organization's goals. This can be hard, as each person wants different things from work. This online, 15-question test can be used to assess a supervisor's motivational interactions with employees: [How Good Are Your Motivation Skills?](#)

---

### Team Building

Teamwork has a dramatic effect on organizational performance. Effective teamwork is integral to the success of the behavioral health workforce. This article provides a solid overview and ideas for team building for supervisors: [How to Build and Manage Great Teams](#).

---

### Culturally Competent Supervision

Supervisors in behavioral health care organizations must be able to effectively communicate with an increasingly diverse set of people. Most of the recent attention concerning cultural competency in the field has been focused on providing culturally competent services to consumers. However, supervisors should support the ideal that diversity adds value to the entire organization. For strategies on how to do this, see [Building Culturally Competent Organizations](#), by Tim Brownlee and Kien Lee.



# Supervision TOOLS

*“If you only have a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail.” – Abraham Maslow*

> Use the tools and resources on this fact sheet to maximize the supervisor role.



## Strengthening the Common Qualities of Effective Supervisors

A gemba walk is a process improvement method that involves in-person observation and interaction with workers doing their jobs. Based on the principles of “Go see, ask why, show respect,” a gemba walk is one way an effective supervisor can better understand what their team is doing and why they do what they do. This Lean Enterprise Institute article is a great reference on how to do it: [How to Go to the Gemba: Go See, Ask Why, Show Respect](#).

---

## Supervision Styles

The book [Who Moved My Cheese](#), by Dr. Spencer Johnson, is a useful tool that offers insight on which type of manager you are and how to enhance your skills.

A **Coach/Team-builder** promotes growth and development of staff, both as individuals and as a team.

A **Teacher** imparts knowledge and models workplace expectations (e.g., business etiquette); mission, vision, and structure of the agency; competencies and skills required; and personnel policies.

A **Manager** handles the day-to-day activities of the organization and its staff, delegating responsibilities, maintaining clear and proper channels of communication, addressing inappropriate employee behavior, and negotiating conflict.

---

## Turning Supervisors into Coaches

Coaching is a series of conversations that help a person move forward professionally. It involves asking important questions and actively listening and making informed suggestions. Research shows that coaching’s return on investment is six times its cost. Coaching as a follow-up to training increases productivity four times more than no coaching. Watch this [video from CoachingMojo](#) for more information on coaching.



## Supervision TOOLS

### Staff Performance Reviews

Supervisors must consider the supervisees' level of training, experience, and proficiency in evaluating their performance. Different approaches are appropriate for different stages or levels of professional development. For instance:

- Staff at Level 1 may need structured support to minimize performance anxiety.
- Staff at Level 2 may seek more autonomy in performance evaluation.
- Staff at Level 3 may need the supervisor to focus on career advancement.

A time-tested tool for effective clinical supervision is SAMHSA's [TIP 52: Clinical Supervision and Professional Development of the Substance Abuse Counselor](#).

---

### Effective Communication

Listening, acknowledging, and engaging staff in decision making can be powerful tools in effectively communicating with employees. Just telling people what to do is not communicating. Watch this [video from CoachingMojo](#) for more help with effective communication.

---

### Effective Conflict Negotiation

The Wheel of Conflict helps supervisors explore the different factors that contribute to conflict and how they may evolve. The central focus of the wheel is “needs,” surrounded by emotions, history, structure, values, and communication. Check out [how to use the tool](#).

---

### Motivating Employees

There are many online tools to help your employees tap into their own self-motivation to achieve, produce, and develop. Try the online test [How Self-Motivated Are You?](#)

---

### Team Building

There are many tools supervisors can use to help support and unite teams. These include encouraging new points of view, celebrating success, and celebrating team success as much as personal success. This [video](#) offers many ideas for building teams and culture in the workplace.

---

### Culturally Competent Supervision

Cultural responsiveness is the ability to learn from and relate to people of your own culture and other cultures. A culturally responsive supervisor acknowledges, demonstrates interest in, and appreciates the supervisee's cultural experiences. This [article](#) in the *Journal of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association* is a great tool to learn more.

# Influence, Inspire, and Empower

AHP can help your organization build the skills, strength, and capacity of its behavioral health workforce. It is our passion. It is what we do. Through assessments, planning, and implementing workforce development initiatives, AHP can promote your agency's goals and help your staff grow into skilled supervisors.

Supervisors' role in an organization is so significant, they can impact the organization's overall growth and success. That is why we designed these tips, strategies, and tools—to strengthen leadership skills, build better workforces, and help your program thrive.

**AHP is ready  
to help.**



Our administrative services, thought leadership, and TTA can be instrumental in ensuring that your supervisors have the support they need to not only excel at their own roles and responsibilities, but set up their team members for success

Contact us now for more information:  
[info@ahpnet.com](mailto:info@ahpnet.com)



Real World Solutions for Systems Change

## CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS

490-B Boston Post Road  
Sudbury, MA 01776  
Phone: 978.443.0055  
Fax: 978.261.1467

## CALIFORNIA

131 N. El Molino  
Suite 100  
Pasadena, CA 91101  
Phone: 626.486.2179

## ILLINOIS

1021 West Adams Street  
Suite 303  
Chicago, IL 60607  
Phone: 312.376.0595

[ahpnet.com](http://ahpnet.com)