Supervision Philosophy Statement

Alexa Connolly, MSEd, LPC, NCC

Supervision is an integral part of counselor education, setting the stage for counselors-in-training to succeed in a rigorously demanding profession. I provide supervision from a combination of feminist and relational-cultural supervision (RCS) models. Both models see supervision as collaborative, transparent, reflective, and social justice oriented, while emphasizing the importance of the supervisee-supervisor relationship and connection.

I believe that it is vital for the supervisee and supervisor relationship to be one that invites in both supported vulnerability and mutual authenticity. The supervisor and supervisee relationship should create a sense of safety based on connection, while also recognizing the supervisees' experiences of oppression and abuse of power (Bradley et al., 2019). Striving for a sense of safety within the supervisory relationship opens the door for vulnerability. I work to create a sense of safety by being open and transparent with the reasoning behind my supervision strategies, sharing my thoughts freely with the supervisee. Ethical and clinical decisions are also openly discussed and modeled for supervisees. This not only allows the supervisee to feel more confident in knowing what I am thinking about their skill development but also sets the supervisee up to gain second-hand supervisory skills.

Collaboration is another important facet of supervision that I emphasize, as it is important to make space for the supervisee to share their own goals. I believe that students often are aware of the areas where they need to grow and endeavor to make space for them to be honest and vulnerable in their self-assessments. When there are moments where the supervisee cannot see areas of growth, I believe it is the supervisor's duty to ensure that these areas are broached with sensitivity and compassion.

In order to foster the highest level of supervisee growth, I often share case-studies and ethical dilemmas that I have encountered throughout my work as a counselor. These are shared in a problem-posing fashion so that the supervisee may utilize critical reflection and find their own solutions, thus enabling them to continue their growth beyond the required supervision period.

I find that it is important to offer supervision in a variety of ways such as individual, triadic, and group supervision. I work to assist supervisees in exploring their own biases, misconceptions, and privilege, as well as addressing moments of countertransference when in individual supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). Triadic and group supervision offer a rich space to allow for critical reflection within a group, as well as offer space for supervisees to learn from each other. I encourage my supervisees to actively engage in group supervision by taking turns presenting clinical topics to their peers and sharing their own case studies. Supervisee thoughts are shared first, to follow a more Freirean-style approach and acknowledge that the supervisor is both teacher and learner.

I adjust my supervision strategies to match the developmental level of the supervisee, starting out structured initially, and moving toward more nuanced work specific to my supervisees' needs. Supervisees will be given the tools to move from highly structured supervision into a more liberatory supervision style based on critical thought and educational empowerment that aligns with the feminist/RCS model I follow. I work to ensure my supervisees are well-rounded clinically and able to work with diverse client populations. Video recordings are a tool used often so that I can accurately monitor the services provided by my supervisees (American Counseling Association, 2014). I also encourage supervisees to engage in conversations with their clients to provide psychoeducation, demystify counseling, and discern

the client's views on counseling session effectiveness. These conversations are parallel to those that occur in supervision and aid with overall supervision transparency. As my supervisees continue to develop, I begin to broaden supervision to include more social justice components and potential advocacy actions supervisees can take to make large scale changes to benefit their clients.

I realize that I have a lot of power and privilege as a white woman who is working toward her doctoral degree. This identity paired with the already present power difference between supervisors and supervisees is something that I work to recognize and attend to as much as possible. My aim is to empower my supervisees, and I feel that my supervision modalities support this. I recall moments in my own supervisee experience where I felt disempowered and work to ensure that I allow moments of quiet reflection in group supervision settings. My aim of these pauses is to ensure that my supervisees have time to process and contemplate their thoughts before sharing them with the group.

I strictly adhere to the American Counseling Association's code of ethics and CACREP's standards. I recognize that supervisory relationships can be impacted by my supervisees' past interpersonal experiences, both positive and negative. My goal is to ensure that my supervisees have a way to provide honest feedback to me and share concerns. Additionally, I plan to explore my own emotional reactions and thoughts on supervision sessions and record them in a journal. This will help me bracket my thoughts as well as dive more deeply into underlying thoughts and feelings that I may be overlooking.

Lastly, I feel that it is important to discuss practical matters with supervisees such as understanding what a balanced caseload looks and feels like, strategies for writing treatment notes and plans in a timely manner, reasonable fee-split rates for contracted work, and exploring

the advantages and disadvantages of working for various counseling agency types such as nonprofit versus private practice. I want to ensure that my supervisees are successful in the counseling profession and find the best fit for their counseling style and personal life goals.

References

American Counseling Association Code of Ethics. (2014). https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/ethics/2014-aca-code-of-ethics.pdf

Bernard, J. M., & Goodyear, R. K. (2019). Fundamentals of clinical supervision (6th Ed.). Pearson.

Bradley, N., Stargell, N., Craigen, L., Whisenhunt, J., Campbell, E., & Kress, V. (2019). Creative approaches for promoting vulnerability in supervision: A relational-cultural approach. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, *14*(3), 391–404. https://doi.org/10.1080/15401383.2018.1562395