Collaborative Fieldwork Supervision Model

The Supervisor considers their department and facility as a broad learning environment and staff as key providers of support. The student will learn from the direct supervisor, other occupational therapy staff, and staff from other disciplines. They will also learn from OT peers, students from another discipline, or possibly students from another facility. (This model may occur in a role-established or a role emerging fieldwork site.

Role of the Fieldwork Educator

* Model the co-construction of knowledge. The supervisor will guide and facilitate the development of questioning and clinical reasoning skills. Learning strategies which explore, question, research, interpret or solidify important knowledge are emphasized.
* **Advance preparation**: The Fieldwork Coordinator for the facility identifies student support needs and learning opportunities within the facility and acts as liaison with the University. The coordinator delegates student preparation tasks to other OT staff members, members of other disciplines, experienced students etc. (For example, a series of in services on topics and techniques used in facility, setting up student notebook with time-frames, designated supervision times, student observation forms used by OT staff which correspond to student FWE). Orientation folders may include self-directed learning activities for student orientation. Attention is given to division of the supervisor’s caseload among the students.

Role of the Student

* Students are encouraged to see out new knowledge and take responsibility for their own and each other’s learning. Ideally, they will develop mutual learning goals and interact to help one another accomplish a task. Students will provide feedback to one another and to their fieldwork coordinator/educator. They must learn to work together! Yet, they should be held accountable for their own share of the work. They need to continually reflect on their developing clinical skill and their ability to establish successful working relationships within their group. They must be prepared to make best use of supervision by bringing questions and case scenarios and asking for specific feedback on assignments as needed.

Learning Activities

* As part of their orientation, students often complete directed readings as to how the collaborative learning model works. If it occurs in a site without an OT, the site coordinator will orient students to basic policy and procedures of the site and will oversee a weekly schedule.
* Initially, the supervisor may set up a weekly schedule of activities that include shadowing other professionals or learning to administer a particular assessment. A coordinated schedule of in-service activities may be offered by other OT staff or individuals from other disciplines. Students also plan learning opportunities within the time table provided, including scheduling of patients and setting up meetings with staff for joint treatment sessions. Reflective journaling is utilized to monitor and enhance the development of clinical reasoning skills (See additional handout). Students use individual pt case or unique experience to teach fellow students, using evidence to support their practices (this may be done in conjunction with in services provided by other staff).
* The OT supervisor sets up a structure to evaluate the success of a practice activity, such as an assessment or intervention. The students provide feedback to one another following the structure provided. Information from these peer or self-evaluations is considered during individual supervision. During site visits, the OT fieldwork educator also directly observes student intervention with client’s and provides direct supervision.
* During group supervision/ education sessions, the supervisor is responsive to questions, concerns, problems identified by students. Students are encouraged to articulate questions to direct the supervision session. Supervisors provide opportunities for students to process their experiences on an ongoing basis with attention to the development of cooperative skills. Group members should give feedback to one another and to supervisor, who gives feedback to the group as a whole and to individuals. Individual sessions include specific feedback on progress made toward attainment of learning objectives.

Variations

* 1:2– one fieldwork educator to two students.
* 2:1 – two fieldwork educators are sharing responsibility for one student.
* Multiple sites – a model where one fieldwork educator has a group of students spread out at several fieldwork sites, usually all the same type of setting.
* Interdisciplinary or Aggregate Model – Students are involved with learning with and from other disciplines and co-constructing knowledge of their professional role.

Benefits

* Opportunities for peer learning, support and discussion in addition to supervisor support. This approach fosters development of teamwork skills and independent learning skills such as reflective reasoning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. If gives more therapists opportunity to try on the educator role and affords increased exposure to new ideas and increased self-confidence for the student.

Drawbacks

* There may be less opportunity for the supervisor to monitor individual student progress and some students may not use peer learning opportunities optimally. This model is more difficult to apply in highly specialized practiced areas and with students who are struggling with competency issues. There is often a misunderstanding of the model and perception of workload increase on the part of supervisors.