




Reflective Supervision Checklist: Supervisors

This resource provides evidence-informed guidance for individuals who provide reflective supervision to public health nurses. A checklist of strategies to prepare for, engage in, and debrief from reflective supervision is outlined. It is important to ensure that all requirements for reflective supervision follow local agency policies and nursing practice standards.

Brief Note: There are different job titles used within organizations to describe leadership positions that may be responsible for doing the work of reflective supervision. The term “supervisor” is used in this document to describe a person who is responsible for leading reflective supervision. This may be a manager, supervisor, clinical lead, public health nurse or other leaders that support nursing supervision.



“What areas of my practice can I improve on to enhance my reflective supervision skills?”

Reflective supervision is a process that takes time to evolve and is enhanced by a therapeutic trusting relationship.¹ Some aspects of reflective supervision may not come naturally to everyone. It is important to reflect on the challenges of reflective supervision and recognize that through education and practice these skills can be developed and enhanced.

Qualities of a reflective leader include:

- values teamwork
- flexible
- good listener
- motivates, supports, and encourages others
- respectful of individual’s thoughts, ideas and opinions
- trustworthy
- positive
- shows appreciation ⁵

There are a few key things supervisors can do to enhance their reflective supervision skills and contribute to positive outcomes for public health nurses, which in turn influences how nurses work with families. Review and consider how these ideas might be used in a way that works best for you and the nurses you supervise.

Preparing for Reflective Supervision

- ✓ **Establish a routine and make reflective supervision a priority.** Set a consistent time and place to engage in reflective supervision with each nurse and make these appointments a priority.
- ✓ **Create a safe space for reflective supervision.**³ Consider physical and psychological safety:

Physical Safety	Psychological safety
<p>Ensure the physical space is calm, quiet, private and limit distractions.</p> <p>Consider placing a “do not disturb” sign on your door.</p> <p>If meeting virtually, mute email and message alerts</p>	<p>Build relationships with the staff you supervise to develop trust and mutual respect.</p> <p>Focus on nurses’ strengths. Create a culture where vulnerability is demonstrated by leaders - and where staff can feel safe to be vulnerable</p> <p>Be aware of your own biases, values, and beliefs and take the time needed to care for yourself.</p>

- ✓ **Slow down, observe and listen.** Do your best to clear your head and be in the moment during reflective supervision. Stay focused on the issues the nurse brings to the encounter.⁵
- ✓ **Collaborate with staff to develop a plan for reflective supervision.** Work with staff to establish expectations, priorities and needs to focus on during reflective supervision. Develop reflective supervision agreements and consider an agency policy to support reflective supervision.³ Consider using a model to guide reflective supervision and provide education to nurses on how to use them. Where possible, enable nurses to choose which model works best for them.
- ✓ **Seek professional development opportunities for yourself and the nurses.**⁵ Create opportunities to learn together to develop an understanding of reflective practice and reflective supervision.⁵



The practice of reflective supervision can be applied during a regularly scheduled session OR during an impromptu encounter when a public health nurse reaches out to you for support and guidance.

Tips for booking reflective supervision

- Avoid booking to close to your lunch break or at the end of a busy day.
- Ensure there is transition time between reflective supervision and other meetings.
- The time devoted to reflective supervision will vary depending on organizational support and supervisor’s time. It is important to provide consistent and regular times to meet with each nurse.



Take some time immediately before reflective supervision to become present in the moment. This can include taking some deep breaths, turning off distractions, doing a quick meditation and stating affirmations to yourself.

Engaging in Reflective Supervision

- ✓ **Stay focused on what is important to the nurse.** Prioritize what is most important to the nurse during reflective supervision. Set aside separate time to address administrative/clinical supervision tasks when possible.
- ✓ **Provide affirmations** when staff share experiences, thoughts and ideas.
- ✓ **Be an active listener.** Be curious and ask open-ended questions to help understand how the nurse is feeling about the situation and how they made decisions for action. Clarify any pertinent details with the nurse. Pay close attention to your body language and observe nonverbal emotions.
- ✓ **Guide opportunities for learning and growth.**³ Create a culture of learning and improvement by utilizing evidence to guide practice and mentor staff to achieve their learning goals.³ Follow the nurse's cues to understand when it is appropriate to share knowledge and when it's more effective to draw on the knowledge and experience of the nurse.³ This can be done by asking the nurse about the knowledge they have and listen for knowledge gaps.
- ✓ **Ask permission before sharing advice and giving feedback.** Asking permission helps prepare the nurse for the feedback and advice they are about to receive.
- ✓ **Focus on strengths.**³ Talk about what went well. Encourage staff to share what they think worked well and why. Provide encouragement and positive feedback. This will support staff to feel confident in their decision-making abilities.⁶
- ✓ **Invite staff to think critically about the work they do with families.** Talk about new strategies, interventions and actions. Encourage staff to explore their practice and different factors that impact their practice such as assumptions, values, beliefs and sociopolitical factors.³
- ✓ **Empathize and acknowledge feelings.**⁵ Help the nurse understand that they do not need to carry the emotional burden that comes with home visiting work alone. Ensure nurses are aware of local supports such as employee assistance programs if they chose to utilize professional emotional supports. Help nurses make connections to their emotions and understand the influence emotions have on the work they do. It might take time for the nurse to feel safe to share their thoughts and feelings. Acknowledge that it is also 'ok' for them not to share their thoughts or feelings.

"That must have been tough for you, I can see you were really prepared for that home visit, you responded very empathetically to that new parent and you did what was right in that moment."

"Tell me more about that..."

"What could you do differently?"

"How did that make you feel?"

You just shared something with me that I am concerned about, would it be ok with you if I shared my thoughts and ideas with you on how I would handle this situation?"



Reflective supervisors are not expected to be counsellors. An overemphasis on feelings are not helpful and can result in feelings of an invasion of privacy.⁵ Instead acknowledge that feelings are always present and impact everything we do.⁵

Following Reflective Supervision

- ✓ **Acknowledge that reflective supervision takes time.** The skills and relationships required for effective reflective supervision take time to develop.⁶ Be kind to yourself and others while you try to understand what reflective supervision strategies work for you and the nurses you supervise.
- ✓ **Understand that there may be challenges.** When starting in a reflective supervision relationship there may be feelings of awkwardness, discomfort and uncertainty.⁵ Some nurses may also be hesitant to engage in reflective supervision. Recognize the differences in power between the supervisor and the public health nurse and consider how this may influence the reflective supervision relationship.⁴
- ✓ **Notice and pay attention to challenges.**⁴ Acknowledging these challenges will support your reflective practice to flourish.
- ✓ **Practice self-compassion and self-awareness.** Utilize mindfulness techniques to help you slow down and be present. These strategies can enhance reflection and help develop new knowledge and understanding of experiences.⁶ Take some time to engage in your own reflective practice with a colleague you trust.
- ✓ **Be open to feedback.** Engage with staff to critique how reflective supervision is going on a regular basis and identify strategies for improvements.
- ✓ **Follow up with the nurse as needed.** Let the nurse know you are thinking of them if appropriate outside of reflective supervision time.⁶ If the nurse had a very challenging experience let them know you are thinking of them and care about how they are doing.
- ✓ **Be flexible.** Acknowledge that sometimes the nurse may need to vent about a challenging situation, be flexible and available and prioritize what they need in that moment.

References:

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