

Roles and responsibilities

Best practice supervision and video discussion guide

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How to use this discussion guide

This discussion guide accompanies the:

- *Best practice supervision guidelines* ('Guidelines')¹
- *Roles and responsibilities* video.

This guide is designed to strengthen your understanding of key supervision concepts.

This guide includes:

- a summary of the key messages in the Guidelines and video
- discussion questions to deepen understanding of key concepts
- discussion questions to consider how these concepts apply to your supervisory practice or organisation
- links to more resources.

The family violence, sexual assault and child wellbeing sectors are diverse. Supervision practices need to reflect the unique challenges and opportunities of each sector. This guide offers options and guidance, rather than a set of instructions to apply in all situations.

The discussion questions can be used in and adapted for different contexts.

Who this guide is for

This guide focuses on the family violence, sexual assault and child wellbeing sectors. However, many of the concepts and questions are relevant to broader community service sectors.

Supervisees and supervisors

Supervisees and supervisors may use this guide (with the Guidelines and video):

- for self-directed learning
- to inform discussions in scheduled supervision
- in peer supervision.

Organisations

Organisations may use the video and this guide in a range of situations, including:

- induction programs
- communities of practice
- team meetings
- planning sessions
- leadership meetings.

Trainers

Trainers may use this guide to:

- facilitate discussions after showing the *Roles and responsibilities* video.

¹ The Guidelines are available on the [Victorian Government's Role of the organisation, supervisor and supervisee page](https://www.vic.gov.au/best-practice-supervision-guidelines/role-organisation-supervisor-and-supervisee).
<<https://www.vic.gov.au/best-practice-supervision-guidelines/role-organisation-supervisor-and-supervisee>>

Key messages

- Supervision is essential for staff wellbeing and retention.
- Supervision is essential for improving practice quality and client outcomes.
- Supervision is non-negotiable. It is a shared responsibility between organisations, supervisors and supervisees.
- Supervision cannot be viewed in isolation. Its effectiveness depends on a supportive and functional organisational culture.
- The organisation's role is to drive and embed high quality supervision for everybody. This supports a learning culture of continuous learning and improvement.
- Organisational leaders must make sure supervisors have the skills, time, energy and resources to provide regular supervision. They must also make sure supervisors do not supervise too many people.
- The supervisor's role is to build a strong and trusting relationship with the supervisee. Supervisors facilitate reflective practice, and support staff wellbeing and positive practice outcomes.
- The supervisee's role is to prepare for, actively take part in and lead their own supervision. They also engage in reflective practice.

Discussion questions

These discussion questions link to key messages in the Guidelines (pages 22 to 28) and themes in the *Roles and responsibilities* video.

The questions may include:

- **Context:** framing for you to open the discussion with – lead with this then ask the question.
- **Prompts:** to encourage more reflection and discussion if needed.

General questions for everyone

Question 1: What are the roles and responsibilities of organisations, supervisors and supervisees?

Prompt

- See Table 1: Supervision roles, responsibilities and outcomes, Guidelines (pages 23 to 27).

Question 2: To what degree is supervision a shared responsibility between the organisation, supervisor and supervisee?

Context

Supervision cannot be viewed in isolation. Its effectiveness depends on a supportive and functional organisational culture.

Prompts

- The organisation's role is to drive and embed high quality supervision for everybody.
- The supervisor and supervisee need to actively engage in supervision and invest in the relationship for it to work.

Question 3: Is one role (organisation, supervisor or supervisee) more responsible than another? Discuss.

Prompts

- Consider power structures. The organisation and management need to make sure they prioritise and assign resources to supervision.
- Consider ownership of the process and who benefits from effective supervision.

Question 4: What are the key elements that contribute to effective and useful supervision?

Prompts

- Policies and practices that make sure supervisors are trained and supported, and supervision is properly resourced and prioritised.
- A positive relationship between supervisor, supervisee and colleagues (if it is peer or group supervision).
- Be truly present during supervision and actively listen.
- Use empathy and be curious about the other person's point of view and experiences.
- Have an agenda to give structure to supervision sessions.
- Prioritise supervision so that it is not cancelled.

Question 5: What advice do you have for your program or organisation that would make a positive difference to supervision practice?

Context

Providing quality supervision is a work in progress for any program or organisation.

Prompts

- Policies and practices to make sure supervisors are trained and supported, and supervision is properly resourced and prioritised.
- Have systems to track if supervision is taking place and assess its quality.
- Give supervisors enough support, supervision and training.

Question 6: What stops quality supervision from happening?

Prompts

- Not being clear about the purpose of supervision.
- Supervisors are stressed and unable to be in the moment with the supervisee.
- Supervisors think they need to have all the answers.
- A lack of reflective supervision.
- A lack of trust and respect between the supervisor and supervisee.

Question 7: How does your organisation include intersectional feminism in supervision?

Context

The *Roles and responsibilities* video mentions 'intersectional feminism'.

Intersectional feminism aims to:

- create more empowering and equal relationships
- reduce paternalistic approaches to supervision.

Prompts

- Intersectional feminism is included in supervision policies and practices.
- Consider how different aspects of a person's identity can affect their experience of the world and related barriers.
- See the section on Intersectional feminist supervision in the Guidelines (page 14).

Question 8: How do you know if intersectional feminism is part of supervision?

Prompts

- Discussions about power differences in the supervisory relationship, practice with clients and the broader system take place.
- There is a focus on justice-doing, advocacy and community activism on behalf of clients and the workforce.
- See the section on Intersectional feminist supervision in the Guidelines (page 14).

Question 9: How does (or can) supervision contribute to a culture that supports diversity and cultural empowerment?

Prompts

- Regularly hold conversations in a culturally safe and inclusive way.
- Regularly discuss cultural safety and inclusion, and what this means in practice.
- Attend training on or learn about how to be more culturally safe. Share key learnings in supervision.
- See the section on diversity in the Guidelines (page 14).
- See the section on Cultural empowerment in the Guidelines (page 12).

Question 10: How can trauma- and violence-informed principles and practices be embedded in supervision?

Context

Trauma and violence-informed principles are:

- safety
- trust
- choice
- collaboration
- empowerment
- respect for inclusion and diversity.

Prompts:

- Consider each principle in more depth.
- Consider the context for supervision in terms of the broader culture.
- Consider how stress and trauma affect the brain and cognitive function.
- See the section on Principles underpinning best practice supervision in the Guidelines (pages 28 to 32).

Question 11: What do we do differently when we practise trauma and violence-informed supervision?

Prompts

- Support a just culture where mistakes are allowed.
- Incorporate trauma and violence-informed principles.
- Understand that vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and even burn out, are normal reactions to the work.
- Use the zone of fabulousness as a guide for individual and team supervision discussions.
- See the section on Zone of fabulousness in the Guidelines (page 42) and wellbeing plans in the appendix.

Question 12: To what extent does your supervision explore what you need to restore yourself?

Context

One of supervision's aims is to explore what we need to restore ourselves so that we can show up to do the work with clients and other professionals.

Prompts

- Consider the link to trauma and violence-informed principles and practices.
- Consider the link to supervision's supportive function.
- See the section on Four functions of supervision, Supportive function in the Guidelines (page 17).

Question 13: How could supervision better help you explore what you need to restore?

Prompts

- Have regular check-ins about wellbeing and stress levels.
- Consider the link to trauma and violence-informed principles and practices.
- Explore vicarious resilience which can have significant, positive impacts on wellbeing since it identifies client strengths and signs of progress.
- Consider supervision's supportive function going through the points provided.
- See the section on Four functions of supervision, Supportive function in the Guidelines (page 17).
- Discuss the supervisee wellbeing plan example in the Guidelines (page 61) during supervision.

Question 14: How important is radical listening in supervision?

Context

In the video, the supervisee refers to radical listening.

Radical listening is a process that helps us:

- breakdown stereotypes
- tackle social injustice
- transfer control back to clients.

Prompts

- To become radical listeners, we need to realise that we frequently undermine our communication by:
 - saying too much

- filtering what we hear through preconceived ideas and assumptions.
- The more our workforce resembles the community we work with, the better our ability to listen will be.

Question 15: Will there be a time when you are so experienced and competent that you will not need supervision? Discuss.

Prompts

- What is lifelong learning?
- Can achieving complete mastery be a stagnant place?
- In the video, the supervisee talks about needing supervision to avoid becoming complacent.
- Remind people about blind spots and our universal, ongoing need to develop self-insight.

Questions for organisational leaders

Question 1: What is the current culture of supervision in your organisation?

Prompts

- Consider policies and practices that are in place.
- Consider how regular and consistent supervision is.
- Consider ways that the organisation, supervisor and supervisee monitor how effective supervision is.

Question 2: How is supervision prioritised, tracked and communicated?

Prompts

- There is direction and leadership about the importance of supervision.
- There are systems for monitoring how regular scheduled, unscheduled, live, group or peer supervision is.
- There are policies and systems that reinforce culturally safe and inclusive practices.
- There are enough resources for supervision. For example, ratios of supervisors to supervisees are manageable.

Question 3: What practical steps can your organisation take to drive and embed high quality supervision for everybody?

Context

Supervision is essential for better practice quality and client outcomes. It also encourages continuous learning and improvement.

Prompts

- Properly resource supervision, including for manageable supervisor-to-supervisee ratios and suitable private spaces or rooms.
- Supervision is included in position descriptions and performance reviews.
- Prioritise induction or training about supervision.
- Prioritise supervision training for new and experienced supervisors.
- Supervisors and senior managers receive their own supervision.
- Provide suitable and private spaces for supervision.

Question 4: How does your organisation assess the quality and effectiveness of supervision?

Prompts

- Are supervisors supported in the role?
- Are supervisees and supervisors asked about their experience of supervision and its effect on:
 - worker wellbeing
 - professional development
 - practice
 - the broader system?

Questions for supervisors

Question 1: How do you make sure supervisees have a good understanding of supervision, including roles and responsibilities?

Prompts

- Early discussions and setting up a supervision agreement.
- Revisit these discussions and review agreements.
- See the 3 *First supervision session* videos.

Question 2: How do you check in and support your supervisee's wellbeing?

Prompts

- Track caseloads.
- Ask what support the supervisee needs for their role.
- Describe your sense of the supervisee's wellbeing with the supervisee. Show compassion and a willingness to support them.

Question 3: How do you discuss and explore power relations at the individual, team and systemic levels?

Prompts

- Discuss the supervisor-supervisee power difference. Reflect on how you use power in relationships.
- Help the supervisee lead their supervision session.
- Discuss systemic challenges and explore advocacy opportunities.

Question 4: How do you make sure you are creating a learning partnership with your supervisee?

Prompts

- Consider and adapt to the supervisee's learning needs and preferences.
- Check in with the supervisee using an open approach.

Question 5: How do you make sure all 4 supervision functions are covered?

Context

The 4 functions of supervision are:

- supportive
- managerial
- developmental
- systemic.

These functions may be covered using internal or external supervision arrangements.

Prompts

- Check in about the 4 functions with the supervisee. Be mindful not to let one area dominate.
- Line manager makes sure all 4 functions are considered, regardless of the supervisor arrangements.
- Use open and curious questions to go deeper.

Question 6: How do you make sure supervisees reflect and have a reflexive stretch in most sessions?

Prompts

- Use open, curious questions during supervision.
- Be comfortable sitting with silence and give supervisees time to reflect.
- Be mindful of being supportive and strengths-based but also challenging.
- The supervisee does most of the talking.
- See the section on Reflective supervision in the Guidelines (pages 34 to 39).

Question 7: What is your role in creating culturally safe supervision?

Prompts

- Explore your own and other people's biases during supervision.
- Learn as much as possible about other cultures.
- Be aware of cultural load. See 'cultural load', Guidelines (page 12).
- Discuss culturally safe practice during the supervision.
- Get advice, feedback or feedforward from supervisees from diverse cultures.

Question 7: How do you sustain yourself as a supervisor?

Prompts

- Take part in your own supervision.
- Self-directed learning.
- Peer support.
- Health, safety and wellbeing strategies.

Questions for supervisees

Question 1: How does supervision help you?

Prompts

- Improves confidence.
- Improves practice by helping practitioners learn about their role and develop their skills.
- Focuses on practitioner wellbeing.
- Helps counter impact of vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue and burnout.

- Helps practitioners learn how to navigate the system.
- Gives management important, de-identified information about the practitioner experience. This can then be used in policy and advocacy planning.

Question 2: What is your role in creating culturally safe supervision?

Prompts

- Explore own and other people's biases during supervision.
- Learn as much as possible about other cultures.
- Be aware of cultural load. See 'cultural load', Guidelines (page 12).
- Discuss culturally safe practice during the supervision.

Question 3: How do you prepare for supervision and take the lead?

Prompts

- Create an agenda and plan what you want from supervision.

Question 4: How do you take responsibility for your own learning and wellbeing needs? How do you discuss this with your supervisor?

Prompts

- Identify when you need your supervisor to adapt their style to suit your learning needs. For example, move from mentoring to coaching.
- Proactively raise wellbeing issues.

More resources

For a full list of supervision roles and responsibilities, see pages 22 to 28 of the Guidelines.

The Guidelines are available on the [Victorian Government's Best practice supervision guidelines: Family violence, sexual assault and child wellbeing | vic.gov.au](https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-government-s-best-practice-supervision-guidelines-family-violence-sexual-assault-and-child-wellbeing)