The Importance of Social Work Supervision

Better Care Network

VIDEO SUMMARY

Social work supervision plays a critical role in quality assurance, social worker capacity building, problem solving in complex cases and the early identification of vicarious trauma in social workers. It contributes towards improved outcomes for children and families and job satisfaction and retention of social work staff. Despite its importance, supervision programs and structures are often overlooked in the development of social work programs and services, particularly in contexts where social work is a new or emerging profession.

In this video, Leang Lo, from Save the Children Cambodia, shares some of his learning that informed the development of the Social Work Supervision Training Program for the member organisations of Family Care First (a network dedicated to supporting children to live in safe nurturing family-based care). Lo discusses the importance of understanding the context in which the program will be implemented and how context influences the structure and design of the supervision framework. He also shares the reasons why it's necessary to put in place a formalised structure, rather than see supervision as consisting only of meetings.

DISCUSSION TOPIC

Contextualisation

In the video, Lo talks about some of the dynamics that could adversely impact social work supervision meetings, in particular undermining the goal of building upon social worker's capacity. In the Cambodian context, he identifies two potential issues that need to be managed; associating 'meetings' with negative past experiences and/or discipline, and power disparity between supervisors and supervisees.

In your context:

? What might be some of the contextual factors that could undermine the effectiveness of supervision meetings, and in what ways?

? What measures can you put in place to address these issues in order to protect the integrity of the supervision program and the purpose of the meetings?

Structured approach to social work supervision

In the video, Lo discusses the importance of using a strengths-based approach to social work supervision. He highlights how this approach helps ensure meetings are safe environments where social workers are encouraged to reflect on their practice and experiences and share their learning.

In your context:

? To what extent does your organisation currently encourage and create opportunities for social workers or practitioners to reflect on their experiences and share their learning?

? Are there any practices in your organisation that discourage transparency, reflection and learning? If so, what are they and how do they stifle reflection and learning?

? What could be modified or done to further reinforce the importance of reflection and learning in social work in your organisation?

? How do you anticipate this would improve social work practice and outcomes for children and families?

? What are the next steps to advocating for or actioning those changes?