



**Approved through order of the Minister of Social Protection,  
Family and Child  
No. \_\_\_\_\_ as of \_\_\_\_\_**

**PRACTICAL GUIDE**

**OF THE PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION  
MECHANISM IN SOCIAL ASSISTANCE**

Chisinau 2009

This Guide provides practical information for the implementation of the Supervision Mechanism in Social Assistance approved through order of the Minister of Social Protection, Family and Child no.99 of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008, and is meant for the staff working in the Community Social Assistance Service and in the Domiciliary Care Service.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Introduction

#### I. Concept of professional supervision in social assistance

- 1.1. Defining supervision. Goal, objectives and principles of professional supervision..... 4
- 1.2. Professional supervision tasks  
..... 5
- 1.3. Main elements in the supervision  
activity.....7

#### II. Supervisor's roles in the social assistance system

- 2.1. Support role  
.....9
- 2.2. Manager role  
.....10
- 2.3. Educator role  
.....10
- 2.4. Mediator role  
.....11

#### III. Features and skills of the supervisor in social assistance

- 3.1. Being a  
supervisor.....1
- 3.2. Being a  
supervisee.....1
- 3.3. Becoming a  
supervisor.....12

#### IV. Types of professional supervision

- 4.1. Individual supervision  
.....14
- 4.2. Group supervision  
.....15
- 4.3. Formal and informal  
supervision.....16
- 4.4. Organising a supervision meeting  
.....16

#### V. Areas of professional supervision

- 5.1. Development of professional  
skills.....20
  - A. Development of the community social assistant's professional skills in case  
management...20
  - B. Development of professional skills for the delivery of home care  
services.....21

C. Development of professional supervision skills.....	22
5.2. Personal development of supervisees.....	23
A. Stress management in social work.....	23
B. Work time management .....	25
C. Monitoring of professional skills development .....	26
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	
<b>.....30</b>	

## **Introduction**

Professional supervision is an important component of the social assistance system, involving the organisation, supervisor and supervised person. The development and consolidation of professional skills of social assistants due to supervision contributes to the improvement of the quality of the social services and has a direct impact on the beneficiaries' situation and their families.

In this sense, professional supervision is an essential managerial and professional activity for any structure and organisation delivering social services and should therefore be an integrated, regular and ongoing part of the organisation's system and procedure.

Supervision represents an opportunity to unify the objectives of the organisation and of the staff. Within the supervision process, an employee is offered the responsibility to work with and supervise other employees to achieve the organisational, professional and personal objectives, which in their turn, will stand for the competence, accountability, continuous professional development and personal support.

### **Why is professional supervision needed?**

Professional supervision is essential in ensuring the quality of services provided to beneficiaries, developing and supporting the staff and ensuring the efficient activity of social assistance organisations/institutions.

Supervision must be a process not an event and should be embedded into the culture of the organisation. By this we mean being an influential part of the shared values and assumptions of all staff working in social assistance structures. Supervision should be seen as right of the supervised person to have support for the solution of professional problems or as a consequence of professional stress. Supervision also provides a means of monitoring and quality control as the supervisor should, from a managerial perspective, ensure the supervisees are working within the organisation's policies, and regulations and that appropriate levels of standards and good practise are being observed.

## **I. Concept of professional supervision in social assistance**

### **1.1. Defining supervision. Goal, objectives and principles of professional supervision**

At its simplest the task of supervision is to get the work of the Social Assistance Departments (SAD) done well through the staff it employs.

Supervision is an opportunity to bring together the objectives of the SAD and the professional objectives of the individual worker.

Supervision is a method of professional support aimed at increasing the skills of work with the beneficiaries, the efficiency of the activity and at preventing professional burnout of the supervised staff.

**The major goal** of supervision is to deliver support to improve professional and personal performances of employees, organisational development, as well as to improve the quality of social services delivered to beneficiaries.

The supervision process aims at achieving several objectives.

### **Objectives of professional supervision:**

- To make sure the employee is clear about his roles and professional responsibilities;
- To develop and consolidate professional skills of the supervised person;
- To ensure workers' compliance with the law and objectives of the organisation;
- To ensure the quality of social services provided to beneficiaries;
- To encourage constructive communication between the employees involved in common tasks;
- To develop a favourable climate for best practice;
- To assist the current professional development of employees;
- To reduce the stress and prevent professional burnout effects among employees;
- To make sure the employee has access to all resources he might need to fulfill his professional commitments;
- To review the employees progress or difficulties in their work with beneficiaries.

Professional supervision is regulated by a series of **principles**:

- *The entire staff involved in the delivery of social services benefit from professional supervision.*
- *The paramount interests of the beneficiary must always be on the first place.*
- *Supervision is promoted and empowered by the organisation having a clear commitment to the supervision process.*
- *Supervision is a joint coordinated responsibility between the supervisor and the supervisee, supported by the organisation.*
- *Supervision is based on negotiating and offers conflict solutions.*
- *Supervision is carried out on a regular and planned basis and should be uninterrupted and action points are recorded, followed up and reviewed.*
- *Supervision involves the management, development, mediation and support of staff by more senior staff identified.*
- *Supervision promotes reflexive critics, competence, responsibility and empowerment.*
- *Supervision should aim to promote anti-discriminating practice.*

## **1.2. Professional supervision tasks**

There are four fundamental interdependent tasks of supervision. Each function of professional supervision plays an important role in achieving the major goal.

The functions are:

- Support - ensures supervisees are not overwhelmed by their work;
- Management - ensuring quality control
- Education - ensuring the development of supervisees
- Mediation - acting as a link for wider communications

**F 1. The support function** objectives:

- helping the staff to control their activities and their impact;
- clarifying the limits between support, counselling and confidentiality in supervision;
- creating a safe climate in the organisation through being aware of potentially dangerous situations;
- helping the staff to explore their emotional problems faced during their work and discuss them;
- helping the staff to identify alternative strategies and methods for intervention;
- helping the employee to reflect upon any difficulties in relation with their colleagues and solve the conflict.

**F 2. The management function objectives:**

- to ensure the quality of the workers professional performance;
- to understand and apply the organisation's policies and procedures;
- to ensure the understanding of roles and responsibilities by the staff;
- to review on regular basis decisions in compliance with legislation and changes in the social assistance system;
- to review decisions taken with regard to beneficiaries assessed needs;
- to ensure a workload balance;
- to ensure the preparation and completion of the relevant documentation;
- the reasons of decisions are clear for the staff and are clearly recorded in the organisation's registers;
- to ensure the efficient organisation of the employee's work time;
- to ensure assessment of professional performances of the supervised staff on a regular basis;
- to ensure that supervision meetings are recorded and action points agreed and reviewed at the next meeting.

**F 3. The education function objectives:**

- assessment of knowledge and skills and contribution of the staff in improving the beneficiary's situation;
- identifying training needs and finding ways of meeting the professional development needs of the staff;
- building the skill to discuss the modality of activity with beneficiaries, colleagues, other organisations;
- developing the skill to self-assess performances and helping them learn constructively from mistakes.

**F 4. The mediation function objectives:**

- inform senior management about the shortage of resources or their involvements;

- utilise resources in the most efficient way;
- present the needs of the staff to the manager;
- present or assist the staff in working with other organisations;
- seek the views of staff in decision and changes to services and processes;
- assist and consult the staff in the complaint solution process.



### KEY POINTS

- Supervision should be an essential part of the culture of the organisation.
- Organisations need an explicit policy which supports the supervision of its staff.
- Supervision is an ongoing process, not an event.
- Supervision is vital for developing anti-discriminatory practice.
- Supervision helps staff cope with the stress of their job.

### 1.3. Main elements in the supervision activity:

The supervision activity is made up of several component parts, helping to structure and organise the work. These are:

- A. **Setting up and distribution of beneficiaries work and responsibilities.** The supervisor should make sure the workers workload is regulated.

Strategies for improvement:

- Use “to do” lists on coloured paper to be able to keep record of compulsory elements in the daily activity that must be checked at certain time intervals.
- Delegate the tasks: when the supervisees are able to cope with a task, it can be delegated and a reasonable deadline can be set.

- B. **Monitoring and reviewing the supervisees’ activity.** Monitoring the supervised staff ensures the good fulfillment of all components.

Strategies for improvement:

- Do this in the regular and planned supervision meetings to discuss relevant information and to solve problems together.
- Make sure that every supervision meeting starts with reviewing the action points planned at the previous meeting.

- C. **Outcomes and assessment of achievements.** The supervisor is responsible for the way the supervised staff is working. Assessments should therefore be carried out on a regular basis, with the participation of the employee and finalise with feedback on performance and drawbacks. The supervisor must be correct and sincere in his/her attitude towards the supervisees.



Strategies for improvement:

- Plan supervision meetings with the newly recruited staff for guidance and clarification of eventual questions related to the new position and the professional integration period. Daily contacts (meetings, telephone discussions) can be recommended in the first weeks, and then weekly and/or monthly meetings are recommended.
- Complete the documentation for the supervised staff (see the approved Supervision Mechanism in Social Assistance) indicating negative and positive aspects, reflecting drawbacks and recommendations made.
- Prepare a supervision meeting where you plan to discuss the supervisee's performance, it is very efficient to ask the workers to make a list of areas in which they think they are able and another list with areas where they feel they need more training or support to improve performance. The list will be discussed with workers' active participation, and they will be able to develop plans of improvement on the basis of it.

**D. Assisting in identifying needs and developing the staff through training.**

The supervisor must be able to provide consultancy and make proposals on continuous training in important issues.

Strategies for improvement:

- Promote the continuous training of the supervisees and make sure they receive the necessary information and training to fulfill their tasks successfully. The supervisor can provide information and continuous training by involving SAFPD specialists and other relevant specialists from outside.
  - Individual and group meetings with the supervised staff are good opportunities to inform the personnel. The advantage of group meetings is that the whole team is present, which ensures simultaneous training of all team members, information on experience can be exchanged, and problems faced during the professional activity can be shared.
- E. Internal communication within the group and external communication within the organisation and community.** Communication is a major component part of the supervisor's role. Communication is a way to pass on important messages to the employees, both from the administration to the staff and vice-versa.

**F. Management of group integrity and reporting the workers' concerns to superiors**

Strategies for improvement:

- Collect information on training needs, recommendations for improvement of the professional and organisational activity from the supervised staff and report them to the head of the Community Social Assistance Service on a regular basis.

**G. Informing employees on all policies and tasks of the organization/institution.**

Strategies for improvement:

- Draft sample agreements with community-based organisations that you can give to all workers.

- Use different technologies to disseminate relevant information among the employees (orally, on hard copies or via e-mail, newsletters, etc.)

**H. Management of administrative tasks.** The supervisor has to keep updated the information on the ongoing files, current tasks and works, support the supervised persons in prioritising tasks, subject to their importance and deadline, make sure that all documents on the personnel are updated.

**I. Record of the supervision meetings.** Action points included in the supervision meeting Report (Supervision Mechanism in Social Assistance, Annex 3) must be reviewed at the next supervision meeting. Records of supervision should be integrated in the confidential regulations of the organisation.

## II. Supervisor's roles in the social assistance system

The process of becoming a supervisor may be accompanied by an initial period of uncertainty and fear. This is when the supervisor must clarify for him/herself the roles of this position.

### 2.1. Support role

Through the **support role**, the supervisor is responsible for the maintenance of integrity of social assistants, providing emotional support, creation of a feeling of professional value, as well as of the feeling of security in the activity they carry out in the supervised persons.



#### KEY POINTS

- Plan regular meetings with the staff to inform them about changes within the organisation/institution.
- Be ready to respond to staffs needs and their need for an informal discussion
- Explain to the staff the effects that any changes of available resources
- It is important that the staff perceives you as an allied, a person willing to support them in front of the administration, to express their concerns and fears.
- Develop an environment that will make the staff to feel free to discuss both their mistakes, failures and successes. Adopt an encouraging stance, especially with new staff, who are less confident in solving certain situations or do not have well-developed self-esteem.
- Encourage the staff to present detailed information, concerns and problems they face.
- Develop your capacity to recognise your own mistakes, failures and difficulties in fulfilling your role; this makes the employees speak easier about their doubts regarding the issues of their job.

## 2.2. Manager role

In professional supervision, the supervisor is also a manager. This supposes coordinating activities, developing resources and facilitating communication both within the organisation and with external people and organisations. An efficient manager requires a variety of skills, and the supervisor must have a clear and integral vision over the functioning of the Community Social Assistance Service (Domiciliary Care Service): knowledge of staff-related problems (information, training and maintenance of staff), management of the workload, presentation of workers' interests before the administration, responsibilities related to the cooperation with other organisations and with the community.



### Key points

- Develop and maintain cooperation relations with other specialists, services/organisations in the system.
- Organise the internal communication on the social service network and system problems.
- Mediate the problem solution within the community social service.
- Represents the interests of beneficiaries within the community system.

## 2.3. Educator role

The main responsibility of the supervisor as a trainer/educator is to inform and help the supervised staff to perform their functional attributions in a qualitative way. The objective is to create a working climate where the access to continuous professional improvement will be appreciated and provided.

The supervisor's responsibility is to create a learning environment that supports the staff to learn basic policies and procedures of the social assistance system, form efficient practical skills in social assistance, influences their attitudes, helps them apply the things learnt in their professional activity and consolidates peer learning.

The supervisor fulfills this role through direct methods such as individual and group meetings on specific cases or issues related to the supervisees' job. In addition, indirect methods can be applied, by organising and facilitating training opportunities in the professional activity among colleagues. The supervisor is the first person the social assistant or social worker comes to and the first professional development factor.

This supposes developing information skills, the capacity to assess training needs of the supervisees, knowing adult learning, and creating an environment that stimulates learning.



### KEY POINTS

- The supervisor has to ensure a level of knowledge and skills adequate for the position of the supervised staff.
- The development is a tool and resource able to ease the supervision task.
- The continuous professional development is an efficient way to provide employees with information, bringing them to the level of conscious competence.

#### **2.4. Mediator role**

The social assistance supposes the need to develop the supervisor's negotiation skill in the relation with the supervised social assistants and social workers, with SAFPD specialists and other groups of specialists and community organisations. Fulfilling this role includes reporting to the administration about the lack or shortage of resources required to solve beneficiaries' problems, presenting the workers' needs and proposals, presenting or accompanying the supervisees in the work with other organisations and specialists to obtain specialised consultation, assisting and providing advice to the supervised people in complaint settlement.



Knowing the roles of a supervisor, you can reflect on the following questions:

- What do I do every day as a supervisor?
- What should I do every day as a supervisor?
- Why can't I do all these things every day?
- How can this be changed?

### **III. Features and skills of the supervisor in social assistance**

#### **3.1. Being a Supervisor**

Being a supervisor means that you should provide the link between the two systems of management and professional practise within the social assistance department. This means that you will work directly with beneficiaries whilst providing support for less experienced colleagues. This will require the development of good time and caseload management skills.

Being a good supervisor does not mean you have to have all the answers to all questions; instead it means you have to have a commitment to facilitating answers which can come from a range of sources, which is different. Being a good supervisor will require you having access to professional support from the head of the Community Social Assistance Service.

A supervisor will need to be:

- good at communication
- willing to offer support
- good at networking

- willing to take decisions
- able to share experiences
- promote new learning
- willing to challenge practise
- aware of organisational/legislative changes or community developments
- able to provide non judgemental and constructive feedback.

### **3.2. Being a Supervisee**

Being a supervisee means you have the chance to stand back and reflect on the work you have done with beneficiaries and to find solutions to problems. It is also a chance to engage in the search for new options or ways of working with beneficiaries and to get support with your work. Good supervision can also help you use our own resources more effectively and manage your workload easier. Supervision should not be something that is done to you; instead it is a joint responsibility and a process which allows you to proactively take part.

Supervisees should be prepared to:

- accept the requirement to be supervised and accountable;
- share the responsibility for making supervision work;
- attend supervision meetings regularly and on time;
- be open to share information and knowledge;
- seek and use guidance;
- advise supervisor of dangers and conflicts with beneficiary work;
- participate in problem solving;
- take responsibility for own learning;
- implement agreed supervision plans.

### **3.3. Becoming a supervisor** has three stages of transition from being a social assistant to being a supervisor:

#### **1. Role identification**

It is the first step in becoming a supervisor. The newly-appointed supervisor must realise the possible reactions of other supervisors and of the staff that can occur during the adaptation to the new role.

The supervised staff can also have ambiguous feelings concerning the new supervisor. They can be glad to have the possibility to learn something new, but, at the same time, they feel uncertain and are afraid of the eventual new responsibilities. They may have certain expectation, concerns and prejudices based on their previous experiences, in the light of which they appreciate the new supervisor. The workers wonder how the new supervisor is going to work. The supervised staff with experience may have a reaction of rejection of a supervisor with less experience than themselves. The new supervisor can also be rejected by workers who want to become supervisors themselves

In addition, the other supervisors, who also want to be successful, might be afraid that the success of their new colleague will exceed their own success.

Moreover, sometimes the head of the Community Social Assistance Service may not succeed to provide the necessary guidance and support to the supervisor to adapt to the new role. Sometimes, the new supervisors are not explained clearly what they are supposed to do and do not have regular opportunities to assess progresses they achieved in the new role.

At this stage, the new supervisor can facilitate his/her own transition by establishing relations at all levels. Discussions with the supervised staff, colleagues and managers on expectations, hopes and concerns are useful whenever possible. Sincere discussions on these aspects establish a conduct of openness and direct problem solving.

## **2. Combining roles**

The challenge for the supervisor at this stage is the need to combine responsibilities of the community social assistant with the new role of supervisor.

This stage is characterised by certain specific behaviours: some supervisors can be tempted to treat their supervised staff as beneficiaries; others continue providing social services indirectly, through the supervised staff (instead of facilitating case management by the social assistant, the supervisor gets involved directly in its settlement). These behaviours lead to the employee's dependence on the supervisor, obstruct his/her further development, block creativity.

## **3. Accepting the role**

At this stage, the supervisor enjoys a certain degree of acceptance and trust in the new position.

Many newly-appointed supervisors do not feel comfortable with regard to the authority, preferring the status of peer to the others. Other people select the opposite way, are too authoritative and get too much involved in the activity of the supervised staff, creating feeling of rejection and/or dependence. The supervisor must acknowledge his/her orientation to authority and realise how his/her previous experience influences his/her working style. A self-conscious supervisor can avoid becoming the hostage of the own past and can use his/her authority in a flexible and balanced manner, which would cultivate the independence of the supervised people, maintaining at the same time adequate monitoring and control on them.



### **Guidance for self-control and maintenance of the supervisor perspective:**

**Control your work schedule.** Remember how long you work at the workplace or if you take tasks at home. Be always organised and ask for support from the management or from your colleagues, if necessary.

**Use efficient stress management techniques.** Don't forget to track and recognise the appearance of overload signals. Find and use stress management techniques that suit you.

**Find an allied among your colleagues.** It is good to have someone to share ideas with and have the necessary confidence to be able to discuss work-related issues. See if there is someone among your colleagues who can be a mentor.

**Communicate efficiently with the supervised staff.** Communication is the key of the new role of supervisor and will help the staff be always informed and provide you the information you need. Use various communication modalities (in writing, via email, telephone, etc.). It is much better to make mistakes communicating too much than by communicating less.

## **IV. Types of professional supervision**

There are several different ways to provide supervision. Primary models that are to be used in Moldova imply that the staff should be supervised through formal individual and/or group supervision methods.

### **4.1. Individual supervision**

Individual supervision is an intervention initiated by an experienced supervising social assistant on another social assistant with less experience in order to develop the professional skills of the latter and to monitor the quality of social services provided by him.

Individual supervision is an opportunity for the supervised person to benefit from regular individual consultation centred on his professional needs. The supervisee is helped to develop his/her working skills with beneficiaries, to identify better ways for independent work, to be confident in his own skills and to discuss openly about the problems he faces.

The supervisor ensures continuity of the process, builds up new knowledge and explains to the workers how to transfer this knowledge to the new situations or directs them to independently discover these possibilities. Directions given by the supervisor lead the staff to a level of competent independence.

Individual supervision also represents a permanent professional relation set up between the supervised person and the supervisor, both being accountable for developing this process.

The central point in individual supervision is the case work analysis – case management. The supervisor must make sure that the social assistant applies the case management method in all the eligible situations and in line with the standardised methodology („Case Management” Guide, annex 1, 2)

The developing and support needs of the supervised person can be easier identified at the level of individual case analysis, individual discussions on the activity of the supervised person, on his problems related to the provision of social services, on his position within the community and organisation.

Individual supervision takes place during the supervision meetings, attended by the supervisor, and held according to a supervision plan set up jointly with the supervised person and with the frequency and structure stipulated in the approved Supervision Mechanism (every 2-3 months and whenever necessary). The supervision meeting Report must be drafted after every individual supervision meeting (Supervision Mechanism, Annex 3), which stipulates the name of the supervisee, the place and time of the meeting, the discussed subjects, recommendations. The deadline and date for the next supervision

meeting are set. It is important that all supervision meeting reports are signed by both participants – supervisor and supervisee.

**Advantages of individual supervision:**

- provides an individual approach to the supervisee;
- facilitates the discussion of issues related to incompetence the social assistant feels embarrassed to address in the group;
- provides the possibility to maintain confidentiality of highly problematic cases;
- is more appropriate for the work with shy people who lack self-confidence or are in a professional adaptation period.

**4.2. Group supervision**

Group supervision is carried out for a group of social assistants or social workers under the oversight of a supervisor. Supervision provides the group with the opportunity to meet in order to review their activity and find solutions together. It helps workers learn one from another and creates a shared learning environment.

Group supervision is also an important team building activity. This supervision method will be particularly useful to SAFPDs which have workers spread over a large geographical area for whom individual supervision meetings are not practical. It is also useful for the domiciliary care service where workers can share issues and ideas related to the vulnerable people they are supporting in their own homes.

Group supervision meetings can address cases of increased difficulty of the supervised social assistants and social workers, discuss the positive practices, and inform the staff on the new tendencies and methodologies in social assistance.

Group supervision is carried in compliance with a supervision plan set jointly and with the frequency and structure stipulated in the approved Supervision Mechanism (once a month and whenever necessary). The supervision meeting Report must be drafted after every individual supervision meeting (Supervision Mechanism, Annex 3), which stipulates the supervisees' name, the place and time of the meeting, the discussed subjects and recommendations. The deadline and date for the next supervision meeting are set. It is important that all supervision meeting reports are signed by all participants.

**Advantages of group supervision:**

- contributes to the generation of more ideas and opinions;
- facilitates the development of anti-discriminatory approaches;
- facilitates peer learning in group and the exchange of experience;
- facilitates the provision and receipt of feedback in a supportive environment;
- contributes to the identification and use of individual skills in the team to get more effects;
- creates a feeling of group membership, responsibility for problem solving;
- contributes to the extension of priority of the supervision process.



### 4.3. Formal and informal supervision

Both individual and group supervision should be regular, planned, structured and recorded. This is called formal supervision. But supervisors should also be available to respond to supervisees between formal meetings when serious problems emerge with beneficiary work that cannot wait until the next supervision meeting. It is important that supervisees become empowered through professional development to take decisions independently but there will be times when it is necessary to refer the problem to the supervisor between formal meetings. These contacts will represent informal supervision. The supervisor in this instance has to develop good skills for managing their own time and workload.

Informal supervision is a component of the „ongoing process” of supervision, but is not the same as formal supervision and must never replace it.



#### KEY POINTS

- Supervision offers many benefits, but at the same time, it requires a good planning allocation of dedicated time.
- Plan ahead, have an agenda prepared and the venue clearly booked.
- Supervision is a shared responsibility.
- A record of all supervision meetings should be kept

### 4.4. Organising a supervision meeting

The professional supervision process is continuous with regular and recorded meetings, held on the basis of a monthly schedule that specifies the date and time of the meeting.

#### Supervision meeting stages

##### *Stage I: Preparing the supervision meeting*

- **Setting up the meeting's objective and agenda**

Any supervision meeting must have a clear objective established in advance. This must include the review of action points from the last meeting, work with beneficiaries and any information on legislative changes, planning or fulfillment of certain work tasks of the employee or discussion of job-related issues. Involve the supervised people in the development of the agenda.

- **Collecting information**

If you need information for your meeting, make sure you have it before beginning the meeting. A meeting without important information turns to be a waste of time.

- **Be clear about the type of supervision**

Depending on the objective, decide how you will arrange your meetings between individual or group supervision meetings. There are issues that should be better discussed individually or in group.

- **Involving other persons in preparing for the meeting**

It is a good opportunity to involve someone from the supervisees or the invited specialists in the meeting to provide a certain type of consultancy. After you decided what people to invite to the meeting, discuss the agenda with them in advance.

- **Prepare the area for the supervision meeting**

The room for the supervision meeting should be identified and convenient. It should be of an area adequate for the number of participants.

- **A regular meeting programme**

The existence of a regular programme of supervision meetings will help staff prepare for supervision meetings and plan other work around it.

## ***Stage II: Organising the supervision meeting***

- **Begin and close the meeting in time**

Good practice indicates the need to be on time for supervision meetings. It proves supervision is considered important to the organisation and is a priority. If people are late or missing from the meeting, discuss why this is and decide if it would help to change the hour of the meeting.. A statement like „We’ve already spent the time set up for this issue. Does everybody agree to continue discussing this issue for ten more minutes then to get to the next issue on our agenda?” – is a good way to test the opinion of the group in this regard.

- **Ask for participants’ signatures**

Ask participants in supervision meetings to keep record of their participation. The blank „Supervision meeting report” (from the professional supervision mechanism in social assistance approved by the order of the MSPFC No 99, as of December 31, 2008) requires this information.

- **Diversify the working environment during group supervision meetings**

Before and after the meeting, plan some time to allow participants to have an informal discussion and to set up relations between them. The “after-meeting discussion” can be the place where people become attached to the group and have good ideas that can be presented at the following meeting.

- **Stick to the agenda**

It is important to set the agenda before the meeting and to include any additional items at the time of the meeting. The agenda should be a joint responsibility between supervisor and supervisee. Finalise the discussion of every point on the agenda by making a brief conclusion. Go to the next issue only when you don’t have any objections and you have everybody’s agreement. If someone does not follow the agenda or speaks too much, intervene to remind him/her of the agenda and rules. Be polite but firm: people respect a well-managed meeting and do not forget meetings where someone has been allowed to speak endlessly.

### ***Stage III: Content of the supervision meeting***

The content of supervision meetings will vary according to the agenda and the current items. Usually, supervision meetings will include:

- Approval of items on the agenda;
- Review of results / progress since the last supervision meeting;
- Review of the work with beneficiaries in discussions and reports;
- Provision of constructive feedback and problem solving;
- Allocation of time to reflect on the experience and feelings related to the professional activity;
- Establishment of professional objectives and of beneficiaries' objectives;
- Development of skills and knowledge;
- Exchange of organisational information;
- Periodic formal review;
- Setting the time, date and place of the next supervision meeting;
- Making the supervisor accountable for writing the minutes of the meeting.

By the end of the meeting, make sure you have the participants' commitment for the fulfillment of the discussed tasks and activities. One of the basic rules is that nobody leaves the meeting without knowing what his tasks are. Avoid closing a meeting by saying "We'll get in touch to see what exactly your tasks are". Do not lose the moment – clarify and put down all the information

### ***Stage IV: Closing the supervision meeting***

- **Get feedback from participants**

You need the opinions of participants on the meeting, what can be improved in their opinion etc. You will have to make sure that everybody gets the needed support, the date of the next meeting is set up, the staff had the possibility to stay together and discuss after the meeting.

- **Analyse the meeting**

Any supervision meeting has to be followed by an analysis process to have an integral picture of its efficiency. At the same time, this analysis will help you to develop supervision activity improving projects.

- **Complete the supervision meeting Report (Supervision Mechanism in Social Assistance, Annex 3)**

Include the discussed subjects, recommendations and deadline in the supervision meeting Report. You will need the information for annual and current reports as well.

### **Report of the supervision meeting**

- It is essential that the Report of supervision meetings according to the approved format.
- Action points and deadlines should be put down mentioning people who are in charge with fulfilling the tasks.
- The time, date and place of the next meeting must be recorded.

- The Report of supervision meetings is a formal tool for monitoring progress and development of the supervised persons.
- It must be signed and copies of it must be distributed to the supervisor and supervisee.
- It is necessary to decide who has access to the Reports of supervision meetings, which must comply with the organisation's confidentiality procedures recognising that there may be cases when confidentiality cannot be maintained (such as the person's well-being, disciplinary issues, etc.).



### ***The features of an efficient group meeting:***

- Participants can include their own concerns in the agenda.
- The furniture is arranged so that participants can see each other.
- In front you have a place for putting down ideas, preferably on a board, in order to keep the information.
- The agenda is presented, modified and accepted by everybody.
- There is a person taking minutes of the meeting and recording the decisions. The same person prepares the notes and distributes them to participants.
- Set up the date for the next meeting, so that participants organise their participation and put down the information on the agenda.
- Participants think if it's necessary to involve somebody else and whom.
- All group members are encouraged to participate actively in the meeting.
- When closing the meeting, participants review who is doing what until the next meeting.

In every group there may be people who create certain difficulties in the group setting. They can reject the decisions and recommendations made. These people can dominate in group meetings with long interventions and may not allow other people to express their opinion, do not take into account other people's opinion. People who avoid taking part in group discussions and do not want to express their opinion on the discussed subjects are also considered difficult.

### **Interventions on difficult participants:**

- Ask for the group's decision on the colleague's difficult behaviour;
- Use the agenda and the basic rules set for group meetings to influence the difficult person's behaviour;
- Be honest: say what is happening during supervision meetings;
- Use different tactics: accept, solve or delegate, use humour, body language (if possible), take a break.

## **V. Areas of professional supervision**

Professional supervision is carried out in the Community Social Assistance Service and in the Domiciliary Care Service.

In the Community Social Assistance Service, professional supervision is performed at two levels: supervision of social assistants by supervisors identified among community social assistants, according to selection criteria set by MSPFC, as well as supervision of supervisors by the head of Community Social Assistance Service.

The supervision of social workers within the Domiciliary Care Service is performed by the manager of the service.

For all groups of staff there are two areas of supervision: one is related to the development of professional skills and the other is related to the supervisees' personal development.

### **5.1. Development of professional skills**

#### **A. Development of the community social assistant's professional skills in case management**

This aspect is related to the community social assistants' work and the functioning of Community Social Assistance Service.

The main method of work with beneficiaries used by the community social assistant is case management. Therefore, the focus in professional supervision must be placed on developing professional skills required for the use of this method. In supervision meetings, the supervisor must make sure that the social assistant follows all stages of case management according to the established standard („Case Management” guide approved through Order of the Minister of Social Protection, Family and Child No.71 of 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2008).

**The supervisor must make sure that** (activities are specified in line with the approved Supervision Mechanism in Social Assistance):

- the case management method is used for all eligible situations (people in difficulty, case of child abandonment prevention, case of prevention of child or adult institutionalisation);
- the workload of the supervised social assistant is established correctly (takes account of the number and complexity of cases, the degree of beneficiary's involvement, etc.);
- the supervised social assistant uses all possibilities to inform the community population on the available social services and cash benefits, eligibility criteria, possibilities to submit and settle complaints regarding the access and quality of delivered social services (in primaria, schools, medical centres, local medias, church, etc.);
- the social assistant uses various sources of case identification (direct contacting by the applicant and/or his/her family/legal representative; referral from another service/public or private institution; notification in written or by telephone from other people than the applicant's family members/legal representative);
- the initial and complex assessment of the beneficiary has been carried out in line with the agreed methodology making home visits (announced and unannounced), involving the multidisciplinary team, the beneficiary, the family/legal representative

and the standardised forms have been filled in correctly („Case Management” guide, annexes no.1,2,3);

- the individual assistance plan is developed in compliance with the standardised methodology („Case Management” guide, annex no.4), is aligned with the beneficiary’s needs and the beneficiary and his/her family participate in the its development;
- social services are provided in compliance with the developed individual assistance plan, the signed agreement and the set schedule;
- cases for referral to specialised services have been identified correctly, agreed with the supervisor and sent to the head of Community Social Assistance Service;
- the decision on case closure or referral to specialised social services is correct;
- documents on the case are prepared and filled in according to standard procedures.

Professional skills of the supervised social assistants are developed in individual and group supervision meetings that are to be held at the following frequency:

- a) group meetings – once a month;
- b) individual meetings – every 2-3 months;
- c) more frequently, if necessary.

The supervisor must inform the head of Community Social Assistance Service on the level of professional skills development in case management and the continuous training needs on a regular basis.

### **B. Development of professional skills for the delivery of home care services**

This activity is the responsibility of social workers and is carried out by the head of the Domiciliary Care Service.

**In this context, the head of the Service carries out the following activities:**

- checks the social worker’s workload taking into consideration the number of beneficiaries in care, the complexity of cases, the beneficiary’s relation with the family;
- checks if home care services are provided in compliance with the developed individual assistance plan, the signed contract and the visit schedule;
- checks if the beneficiary’s individual assistance plan is reviewed at least once every three months and changes are made according to the newly identified needs;
- checks the accuracy of the suggestion that the beneficiary leaves the Domiciliary Care Service;
- checks if the social worker drafts and fills in documents on beneficiaries in care, according to the developed methodology of the service (Regulations of the Domiciliary Care Service) namely: that the beneficiary’s file contains all home visits in line with the established schedule, all care provided to the beneficiary stipulated in the individual assistance plan, as well as if beneficiaries’ files are kept in a safe place, which ensures maximum confidentiality of information;

- provides support in setting cooperation relations at community level with the community social assistant, medical worker and in mobilising community members to provide support to the beneficiaries of home care services;
- makes sure that the social worker follows the principles and minimum quality standards set for the Domiciliary Care Service.

The development of professional skills of the supervised social workers takes place during group supervision meetings held once a month and during individual meetings, if required.

The head of the Domiciliary Care Service must inform the manager of Social Assistance and Family Protection Department on the level of social workers' professional skills, identified training needs, problems faced by the administered service.

### **C. Development of professional supervision skills**

These activities are organised for the supervising staff: supervising social assistants, head of Community Social Assistance Service and head of the Domiciliary Care Service.

A good organisation of the supervision process supposes the development of the corresponding skills, in a special training first, then in trainings held by the manager of Social Assistance and Family Protection Department. This activity **includes**:

- informing supervisors on regulatory acts, methodological developments, best practices and other relevant information on a regular basis; such notification can be made when and as new documents emerge;
- developing and building skills in supervision, namely: case management methodology; new social assistance methodologies; methodology for holding individual and group supervision meetings, making monitoring visits in the field; methodology for assessing professional development needs and for developing the individual professional development plan; emotional support methodology and work time management;
- developing skills of monitoring case referral to specialised social services namely: checking the eligibility of every case referred to specialised social services, the accuracy of completing the beneficiary's file, analysing the actions on the case, correct identification of beneficiaries needs that cannot be met at community level and require specialised intervention; referral of all cases of children recommended for placement outside the family to the Gate-keeping Commission, recording the referred cases (Supervision Mechanism in Social Assistance, annex no.6).

It is recommended that these activities are held whenever necessary, but at least once a year in group meetings.

## **5.2. Personal development of supervisees**

### **A. Stress management in social work**

The goal of social work is to provide support to different groups of people in difficulty and in crisis situations. In this context, social work is a profession associated with stress influences that can determine stress and professional burnout.

There are professionals among social assistants who are very careful to themselves, both in terms of professional and personal life. They learn useful modalities of stress management and do not allow pressures to overwhelm them.

Other people control stress well, but sometimes they feel the effects of burnout. These people do not have the information and skills required to manage higher levels of stress and thus burnout settles down.

Finally, there is a third category of social assistants who seem to be in an endless state of increased stress and burnout, who complain about feeling overwhelmed and helpless. These people are not able to manage their stress and have a frequent feeling of burnout.

In this context, one of the important functions of supervision is to provide professional support and counseling in order to prevent stress and professional burnout, as well as emotional support that requires knowing these aspects.

#### **Causes of stress and burnout in social work:**

- lack or shortage of resources the social assistant / social worker can use to contribute to beneficiaries' problem solving;
- incompetence or lack of experience can lead to emotional burnout of social assistants with little experience or of the newly recruited ones;
- if the stress specific for social work is especially high, then the work itself is the reason for burnout;
- excessive emotional involvement in the beneficiary's problem. The most devoted social assistants and those who place most of energy to support beneficiaries are at the highest risk of being subject to emotional burnout.

In this context, it is very important that the supervisor informs the supervised staff on the identification of symptoms of stress and professional burnout, ways of fighting and overcoming these states, and identifying signals warning that the person is on the way to burnout.

One of the sources of professional stress is the social assistants' work conditions, especially, the conditions provided at community level. In order to reduce the negative effects of such influences, it is recommended that the supervisor and the supervised social assistants analyse the potential of professional burnout caused by the conditions and specificity of the professional activity (lack or shortage of resources information and power; conflict relations; overload, boredom, lack of feedback and appreciation, sanctions, value conflict and tensions caused by the lack of results expected from certain groups of beneficiaries).

In this context, the supervisor's task is to prevent and contribute to the settlement of conflicts that can occur in the staff group, generated by insufficient understanding of the duties, perception of these as contradictory, disagreement with the colleagues or with the supervisor, incommunities generated by the workplace and the resources available for the professional activity.

#### **Effects of the stress from physical, affective, cognitive and behavioural perspective**

<b><u>Physical:</u></b>	<b><u>Affective:</u></b>
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Persistent tiredness	Anxiety
Sickness	Feeling of guilt
Muscle shiver	Suffering, depression
Involuntary movements	Denial
Headaches	Fear
Sight problems	Unreliability
Teeth grind	Loss of control
Weakness	Feeling of overwhelming
Cold and wet extremities	Intense anger, irritability, agitation

<b><u>Cognitive:</u></b>	<b><u>Behavioural:</u></b>
Limited attention	Instability in activities
Lack of concentration	Withdrawal/Lack of participation
Memory problems	Emotional/physical outburst
Limited problem-solving capacity	Suspicion, excess of sensibility to the environment, insomnia, nightmares
Limited abstract-thinking capacity	Changes in communication patterns
Difficulty in decision-making	Increased alcohol/drug consumption
Obsessive thinking	Incapacity to rest
Meditative states	

In order to prevent and overcome the above-mentioned problems, the supervisor must learn and apply strategies and techniques of stress and professional burnout management in his/her professional activity and in the employees' supervision.

An efficient stress control modality in social work is the skill of establishing a control circle – what you can and cannot control in the professional activity. It happens sometimes in practical activity to consume energy worrying for things that are totally beyond your control instead of focusing your efforts on things you can control.

One way to measure the extent of control is that the supervisor reflects on his/her own circle of influence:

- a. aspects of the situation we can control (our own actions and thoughts, our creativity, etc.);
- b. things we cannot control, but can influence. For example, we cannot control the specific actions of a social assistant we are supervising, but we can influence his/her activity by providing qualitative support and guidance;
- c. things we cannot control. We cannot always control what the supervised people do or do not do. We cannot control decisions made by the manager. We do not have control on policies and procedures specific for the social protection system.

We can think how to influence the supervision activity and focus on things we can control (how we work with social assistants / supervised social workers; how we treat beneficiaries of the social assistance system; how we make sure that we have the necessary energy to give to beneficiaries, etc.).

This type of support should be provided whenever necessary, in individual and group meetings.

## B. Work time management

The essential aspect of time management is that the supervisor must help the supervised staff to accept the idea that they can decide themselves what to do and when to do it. Some people are always complaining that they do not have enough time to do everything they plan. Some people take tasks at home and are always concerned with filling the gaps.

Why? Sometimes this happens because of the organisation's traditions, or because of overwork and incorrect organisation of the working time.

To accomplish this task the supervisor and the supervisees analyse the efficiency of work time usage and the work conditions for the staff: personal office, presence or access to equipment, development of a flexible working schedule, access to transport units of the mayor's office.

The supervisor also informs the supervised social assistants on how to organise their work time efficiently (prioritisation of tasks, combination of tasks, polite refusal when you cannot keep your word, etc.), and on techniques of exclusion and confrontation of current distraction factors (unplanned visits, excessive telephone calls, received mail).

The collected information and the proposals will be transmitted to the head of CSAS who will take measures to improve work conditions and optimise the use of work time.

Activities within this compartment must be carried out once a year for information and, whenever necessary, for support in individual and group meetings.



### KEY ISSUES:

- The working day of a supervisor does never have enough hours to achieve everything that is to be achieved, but, provided an intelligent organisation, the working time and the tasks become easier to manage. Identify the organisation system you find the most efficient and use it.
- Do not forget to save time for unforeseen events because they will definitely occur.
- Help the supervised personnel understand your organisation style so that they can contact you in case of problems as these occur.
- Do not forget that you are an example for your colleagues who will be more organised if they accept your organisation style.



### **Time management strategies:**

1. Analyse how efficiently you use the working time by:
  - a) carrying out the activities set in the job description;
  - b) developing and completing the monthly work schedule;
  - c) verifying selectively beneficiaries' files completed by the supervised social assistant;
  - d) identifying the tasks that are not fulfilled within the deadlines.
2. Organise the working space:
  - a) presence of a personal office;
  - b) presence or access to equipment (telephone, consumables, computer, Xerox, fax, internet, etc.);
  - c) possibility to have a flexible working schedule;
  - d) access to transport units of the mayor's office.
2. Make a "to do" list.

### **C. Monitoring of professional skills development**

Monitoring the development of supervisees' professional skills includes the assessment of training needs and the annual development of the individual professional development plan, which is reviewed every 6 months (Supervision Mechanism in Social Assistance, annex no.4).

This process is organised in the following way: the supervisor monitors the supervisees' professional development; the head of Community Social Assistance Service monitors the supervisors' professional development and the head of Domiciliary Care Service monitors the social workers' professional development.

Information on professional development needs identified in groups of supervised staff is transmitted regularly to the head of Social Assistance and Family Protection Department for analysis and planning of continuous training courses.

### **Finally:**

The practice of providing and receiving professional supervision must be an integrated part of social work.

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