

Building a Highly Effective Unit

Supervisor Core – Module 6

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Overarching Learning Objectives

- Know how to lead staff in an analysis of their unit environment
- Identify stages of group development
- Know strategies that will increase the unit’s level of effectiveness
- Know the steps to the improvement planning process

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Day 1


- Welcome / Introductions
- Organizational Units in Child Welfare
- Stages of Group Development
- Characteristics of Highly Effective Units



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Day 2


- Building a Highly Effective Unit
- Strategies for Improving Unit Effectiveness
- Strategies for Sustaining a Highly Effective Unit
- Wrap-Up



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Small Group Exercise

- Take 3-4 minutes and make a list of **everything** you have in common.
- Write your list on flip chart paper.
- Identify the most interesting item on the list.
- Explain why the item was chosen.




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“The Unit” in Child Welfare


- Group of people working together to achieve a specific end
 - Sharing job skills / knowledge
 - Focusing attention on task performance
- One supervisor responsible for small number of frontline staff
- Interdependent on other units in the agency

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To achieve the highest level of unit functioning, supervisors must understand and be able to describe the unit in its present state.




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- Turn to **Journal Page #2** and consider your unit as you answer questions.
- Next, write down 3 sentences that best describe your unit, using six-inch pre-cut flipchart strips.

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Systems



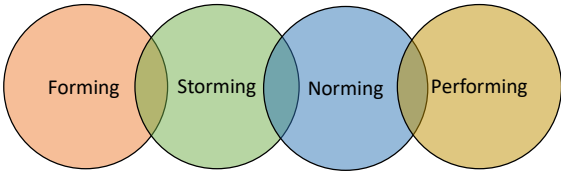
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Supervisors must understand how units progress through developmental stages.



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Stages of Group Development



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Forming

- Staff are getting to know each other
- Staff are testing each other and the supervisor about what is acceptable behavior



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Storming



- Roles and responsibilities of unit staff being negotiated
 - Exploration of issues related to control
 - Staff attempt to be seen as leaders
 - Differences of opinion are common
 - Staff compete for their ideas to be heard
- High emotions and tension


Norming



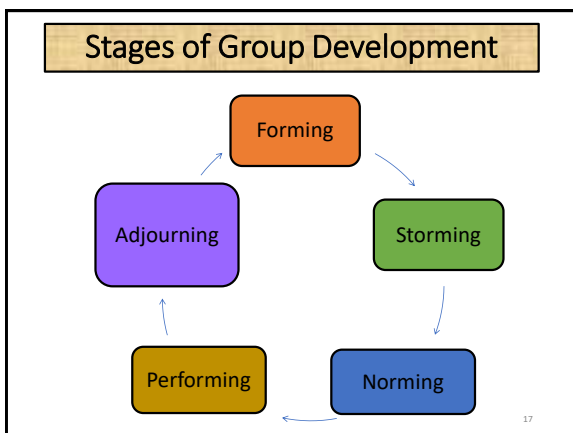
- Staff start to become comfortable with principles they've established for unit
- Accepting their roles and responsibilities; begin to work well together
- Understand importance of collaborating with one another to fulfill their unit's goals
- Staff beginning to build more trusting relationships with one another

Performing


- Relationships solidified/mature
- Using effective work patterns/styles
- Staff committed to high quality performance
- Functioning together well
- Able to solve most day-to-day issues on their own
- Unit running smoothly



The unit becomes a team!

Adjourning




- Occurs every time a staff member permanently leaves unit
- Remaining staff may experience grief, loss
- Productivity could be impacted
- Unit returns to Forming stage and once again moves through developmental stages

Without exception, every group goes through the stages of development



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Forming Stage

Staff:

- Are dependent
- Are anxious
- Need structure
- Need to feel included


Supervisors need to:

- Be directive
- Be confident
- Provide structure*
- Invite staff participation
- Allow staff to express views anonymously

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Provide structure

- Have clear, written agendas every meeting
- Inform staff of unit goals and how they align with those of the agency
- Assign tasks; set expectations
- Make needed decisions
- Help staff establish unit principles for working together
- Be fair and sensitive to staff



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Storming Stage

Staff:

- May start to resent supervisor's directiveness
- May engage in conflict

Supervisors need to:

- Empower staff
- Begin to delegate a few tasks
- Make sure staff listen to each other
- Send message about supporting staff differences



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Norming Stage

Staff:

- Need to take on more responsibility for decision-making, problem-solving, planning

Supervisors need to:

- Involve staff in leadership functions
- Ensure staff conflicts are resolved quickly
- Keep staff focused on unit's purpose



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Performing Stage


Staff:

- Are interdependent
- Perform consistently at a high level

Supervisors need to:

- Serve as pathway between unit and administration
- Help make decisions as needed





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Reaching the Performing Stage is not easy, particularly in child welfare where so much of the work is crisis driven, and turnover is a huge problem.



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Adjournment Stage

Staff:

- Are losing a member of their unit

Supervisors need to:

- Provide opportunities for staff to:
 - Celebrate departing member
 - Acknowledge feelings of loss and uncertainty
- Guide staff back through developmental stages



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- It's not usual for units to regress to earlier stages.
- Some units may never make it to the Performing stage.
- *If* they make it, some units may not stay long at the Performing stage.

Supervisors must know and understand group processes

The Unit

- Embraces diversity
- Guided by values
- Has trust, cohesion, and a strong identity
- Has a culture of recognition
- Regularly uses data to make decisions
- Shares decision-making whenever possible
- Collaborates effectively



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Supervisors must nurture



Unit success requires


- Unselfish commitment
- Persistent effort
- Movement beyond focusing on self to focusing on what's best for the unit



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The Unit Embraces Diversity

- Of its own members
- Of others in the agency
- Of community partners



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Diversity of Unit Staff



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Challenge: change people's focus


- From the negative
 - What doesn't work
 - Conflicts that result from clashing opinions or values
- To appreciating differences
 - The strengths and possibilities



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Demonstrate diversity competence


- Make sure everyone's voice is heard
- Challenge intolerance
- Actively promote importance of diversity
- Ensure equal rights of others
- Call on skills and talents of others different than ourselves
- Highlight diversity of your group



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Team player roles


- Contributor
- Collaborator
- Communicator
- Challenger



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Contributors

- Task-oriented
- Provide team with information
- Push unit to excel
- Dependable
- Capable
- Organized
- Responsible
- Can be authoritative



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Collaborators



- Goal-directed
- Flexible; open to new ideas
- Imaginative
- Willing to pitch in
- Shares the limelight
- Big-picture people

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Communicators

- Process-oriented
- Effective listeners, facilitators
- Supportive
- Considerate
- Relaxed
- Enthusiastic
- Tactful
- Positive people-persons



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Challengers



- Willing to disagree
- Honest
- Outspoken
- Principled
- Ethical
- Adventurous


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- Everyone has a primary style that comes most naturally
- People can develop or strengthen other styles
- Supervisors and staff need to become aware of their own style

• Goal: create a balanced sense of team and become a more effective unit

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Discussion Questions



1. Is there a balance of roles?
2. What would happen if units were made up of mostly Challengers?
3. What would happen if units were made up of mostly Collaborators?

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Generational differences



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Veteran staff / new staff



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Veteran staff

New staff

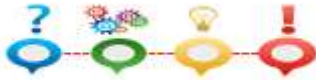
- Generally have more experience, connections
- Can feel threatened by new staff
- Supervisors can encourage them to serve as role models for new staff

- Bring new talents and fresh thinking
- Can feel intimidated by veteran staff
- Supervisors can help veteran staff see the value of new energy, creativity

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Discussion Questions

1. If the new supervisors have considerable child welfare experience, what can s/he do to make the transition as painless as possible for everyone concerned?
2. If the new supervisor has significantly less child welfare experience than most of the unit staff, what can s/he do to make the transition as smooth as possible for everyone concerned?



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Behavior types



Dominance

Influence

Steadiness

Conscientiousness

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Dominance

- Thinks big picture
- Independent, persistent, direct
- Energetic, busy, fearless
- Focus on own goals more than people
- Directive
- Ask "what?", "when?"

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Influence

- Social, persuasive, friendly
- Energetic, busy, optimistic, distractible
- Imaginative, focus on the new and the future
- Involved in many activities
- People focused
- Tell rather than ask
- Ask "who?", "what?", "when?", and "why?"


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Steadiness

- Consistent
- Accommodating, peace-seeking
- Like helping and supporting others; good listener and counselor
- Close relationships with few friends
- Asks rather than tells
- Ask “how?”, “when?”, “what?” and “why?”

Conscientiousness


- Slow and critical thinker, perfectionist
- Logical, fact-based, organized, follows rules
- Don’t show feelings; private; few but good friends
- Ask “why?”, “how?”, “what?”, “when?”, “why not?”, and “what else was considered?”



1. The strengths of our type as supervisors are:
2. The strengths of our type as team members are:
3. These environmental cues (e.g., office environment, desk and desk top, seating, wall/room decorations, etc.) would tell people which type we are:
4. Three things our type could do to be more effective supervisors would be:

Ideal Unit

Behavior Types




■ Steadiness

■ Dominance


■ Influence

■ Conscientiousness



- Help staff know their behavior type
- Have a “behavior type reveal”
- Utilize strengths of each behavior type


- Principles or ideals
- Strongly held beliefs
- “Should” statements



Fundamental Social Work Values

All people have:

- Intrinsic and irreducible worth
- A right to liberty, including self-determination and privacy
- A right to justice, including equal opportunity
- A responsibility to help others achieve their social rights and human potentials



All children have an absolute right to a safe, permanent, stable home which provides basic levels of nurturance and care and is free from abuse and exploitation.

(Rycus and Hughes, 1998)



Child welfare principles

Act in the child's best interests:

- Aim activities toward protection of children
- Provide family-centered services
- Promote permanence for children
- Services must be culturally competent
- Least-restrictive out-of-home placements as close as possible to child's home

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Value	Unit Objective	Behavior(s)
People should be treated with respect and dignity	Phone calls from clients will be returned within two business days	Staff will set aside time every morning and afternoon to return phone calls
	Disagreements among co-staff will be kept private	Staff will speak directly with the person they disagree with to discuss the issue. This will be done privately

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“...reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something.”

Merriam-Webster

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When trust exists	Without trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People have no need to be cautious with one another • They truly believe the intentions of everyone are good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success of the unit's efforts is compromised • People may not cooperate with one another



To promote a sense of trust

Create a unit climate:

- That values everyone’s efforts and contributions
- Where people are encouraged to ask for help
- Where creativity is encouraged
- Where mistakes are considered opportunities for learning and growth
- That provides emotional and task support to its staff

- It’s essential to actively involve staff in the creation and sustainment of this climate.
- Supervisors should make this a high priority endeavor.



Cohesion

To the extent unit staff form relationships, like each other, and can work closely together, unit staff will enjoy high morale and productivity, which also ensures low turnover. Positive relationships among unit staff are strongly linked to staff retention.



Signs of a cohesive unit

- High levels of support, trust, and respect for individuality among staff
- Engaged participation during meetings
- Commitment to unit outcomes
- Enjoyment of unit members working together

(CPS pgs. 21-22)

Supervisors can

- Lead by example
- Communicate openly
- Promote knowing each other personally
- Not place blame
- Discourage cliques
- Discuss trust issues

(Adapted from MindTools: Building Trust Inside Your Team: Creating a Strong, Cohesive Team)


Working with Non-Team Players

- Avoid jumping to conclusions
- Understand there may be reasons the behaviors
- Engage person(s) in conversation
- Make no accusations
- Ask what may be bothering them or influencing their behavior
- Respond as appropriate to circumstances



“Passion and hard work often stems from affirmations staff hear from their supervisor. Staff want recognition, verbal appreciation and encouragement.”


<https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/8152-employee-appreciation-tips.html>



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Highly effective units use data


- Gather/analyze information
- Set measurable targets
- Track progress
- Give each other feedback on performance
- Review individual cases in detail



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Self-evaluation advantages

- Documentation
- Internal and external communication
- Unit cohesion




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Decision-making

Having staff involved in decision-making...


- Provides opportunities for professional growth
- Increases staff commitment to problem-solving
- Creates collaboration



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Factors to be considered


- Is the decision critical or routine?
- Is the decision simple or complex?
- Is there one possible course of action or many?
- How much time is available to make decisions?



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5 types of problems

- Routine
- Non-routine
- Expected
- Unexpected
- Crisis



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Decision-making strategies

- Supervisor decision
- Group decision
 - Decision by supervisor after group discussion
 - Majority rules
 - Consensus



Questions to consider

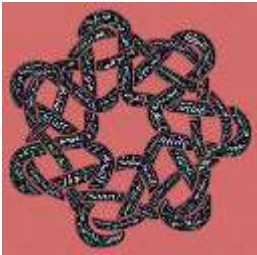
- Is the decision to be made important to the group?
- Is there enough time to gather staff before a decision must be made?
- Do you need a high level of staff buy-in?




Effective collaboration is a process...
 constructively exploring differences...seeking solutions...
 The collaborative group is more important
 than the individuals...
 the individuals share equal rights and privileges.”
Mordock 2002


Internal unit collaboration

- Essential to successful functioning of unit
- Necessary to achieve child welfare goals and outcomes
- Staff share information, are committed to the process at hand, keep forefront the agency mission




Internal Agency Collaboration

The work of every direct service unit has a significant impact on the work of every other direct service unit in the agency.



External agency collaboration

- Be aware of the function, mission, role, etc., of collaborative parties
- Greater understanding of how each partner operates = more productive collaborative relationship




Need to know

- Partner agency mission
- Hierarchical structure of partner organization
- Available services / scope of practice
- Client eligibility criteria
- Cost for services; available financial support
- Collaborative partner's perceived role in the relationship

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Collaborative parties

- Share a vision for their clients
- Understand the respective missions of the other parties
- Provide feedback on what is needed
- Support the collaborative effort



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Collaborative parties




- Believe each party will do what it says; follows through on agreed-upon actions
- Are committed to working together
- Have cross-systems training available
- Are culturally competent

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Discussion Questions

1. What would be the consequences of conducting child welfare work without this person/entity?
2. What would happen if this person/entity did not trust you or the agency?



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Discussion Questions




4. What impact does feelings of alienation and/or hostility have on the PCSA's ability to achieve its goals and objectives?
5. To be genuinely collaborative, what could you and/or what would you want your staff to do to address the problem above?

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Harmful Behaviors

- Constantly critical
- Domineering
- Manipulative
- Judgmental
- Acting disinterested
- Having sub-conversations



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More harmful behaviors




- Simply agreeing on everything
- Avoiding decision-making efforts
- Name-calling
- Avoiding taking responsibility
- Making fun of others' and/or their ideas

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Desirable behaviors


- Optimistic
- Punctual
- Prepared
- Supporting each other
- Courteous
- Open-minded
- Participative
- Listening to understand
- Sharing the work
- Respecting other's views



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Group responsibilities

- Hold each other accountable
- Persuade others to cooperate
- Resolve and negotiate conflict
- Build consensus
- Fulfill commitments
- Avoid disruptive acts and words



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Group Responsibilities

- Encouraging and motivating others
- Accepting suggestions
- Listening to different points of view
- Communicating information and ideas

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Model Emotional Connectiveness

1. Be aware of people's unspoken feelings and moods.
2. Pay attention to everyone.
3. Acknowledgement your observations.
4. Pick the right time and place.
5. Clearly identify purpose of meeting.



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You may wish to include...

- 10 – minute morale assessment
 - Helps supervisors stay informed about attitudes, motivations of staff, unit issues
- One minute check-ins
 - "Paul, tell us how your mandated reporter training went with the county school staff yesterday."

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Improvement Planning Process

- Solution focused instead of problem focused
- Builds energy, takes away finger-pointing; prepares supervisors to creatively involve entire unit in improvement planning



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Improvement Planning Process

- Step 1** • Consider what is already working.
- Step 2** • What made this work or caused this success?
- Step 3** • What are you trying to accomplish? What is your objective?


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- Step 4** • What are the benefits of achieving the objective?
- Step 5** • What can you do more, better, or differently to move closer to the objective?
- Step 6** • Complete the action plan.

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Strategies for Sustaining Units

1. Establish clear goals
2. Ensure agreement prior to action
3. Build realistic timetables
4. Consult with unit members frequently and genuinely
5. Relate the improvement process to organizational work



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6. Encourage openness and frankness
7. Do not raise false expectations
8. Reorganize work if necessary
9. Remember that unit improvement can precipitate other challenges
10. Learn from mistakes
11. Model and reward desired behavior



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Practice

Recommend a strategy (or initial comments) to use with your staff regarding the following situations:

- Having the initial discussion about becoming a highly effective unit
- Managing staff frustration in the storming stage
- Providing feedback regarding a poor CPOE rating
- Celebrating the unit's developmental progress and/or accomplishment

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Reflections

On each file card, write one thing you especially valued or appreciated about each person in your small group.

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For additional supervisor resources

<http://www.ocwtp.net/Trainee%20Resources.htm>

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Until we meet again

- Travel safely
- Complete your E-Track evaluations
- Take care of yourself
- Reach out to colleagues for support
- Remember how critical you are to developing staff competency and assuring the safety, stability, and well-being of children and families.

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