



**Social Workers
Registration Board**

Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

**SUPERVISION EXPECTATIONS FOR
REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKERS**

POLICY STATEMENT

Approved: August 2009
For review: August 2011

1. Introduction and Background

The Social Workers Registration Act does not specify an expectation for supervision although Section 29 (1) & (2) outlines that the Board may adopt conditions for practising certificates that may include supervision. Supervision is a universally accepted practice standard in the social work profession and considered by the Board to be an essential element ensuring competent social work practice.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the expectations of the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) regarding Social Work Supervision both in respect of the requirements determined by the Board for Competency and Annual Practising Certificates.

2. Supervision as a Registration Requirement

The Board has identified the criteria an individual is expected to meet when gaining an Annual Practising Certificate. Included in this is an expectation that a practitioner will access regular and appropriate supervision at least monthly and in a manner that is consistent with reasonable expectations of the levels of skill and practice ability of the individual.

Professional supervision is one of the essential means to develop workers and ensure quality service provision. Professional practice knowledge and skills are learned and gained through tertiary study and gaining social work qualifications. It is the direct practice, guidance and reflection provided by supervision that enhances professional development and supports competent, accountable and safe practice. Furthermore the Board considers that the interests of the public are best served by the profession requiring all registered social workers to be in a formal supervision relationship.

The professional body, (ANZASW), most social service agencies employing social workers, and educational providers arranging practica have clearly stated policies regarding supervision. It is not the intention or role of the Board to define supervision as it recognises the range of definitions that are approved by the profession, social service agencies and social work educators, The Board also recognizes the high level of consensus within the social work profession and amongst other key stakeholders of the purpose of supervision, the principles that guide it and the belief that it is fundamental to competent professional social work practice.

SUPERVISION EXPECTATIONS FOR REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKERS

3. Principles of Supervision

The following principles are common to a number of NZ social work supervision policies and provide a framework, alongside agency supervision policy. These principles are expected to guide the supervision practices of registered social workers:

- The over-riding priority of professional supervision is to promote and protect the interests of the client.
- Professional supervision promotes safe and accountable practice.
- Professional supervision promotes inclusive practice underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi, responsiveness to Māori, and sound ethical principles.
- Professional supervision promotes active recognition of the cultural systems that shape the workers practice.
- Professional supervision encompasses a respectful, strengths-based approach which affirms people's dignity, capacity, rights, uniqueness and commonalities.
- Professional supervision provides a forum to ensure accountability to the agency, to clients and the profession.
- Professional supervision is available for all practicing social workers.
- Professional supervision is regular and uninterrupted and based on a negotiated contract.
- Professional supervision is located within a learning environment where professional development is valued and encouraged.
- Professional supervision will be consistent with the requirements associated with level of experience.

4. SWRB expectations of practitioners in respect of Supervision

Practitioners will:

- access regular professional social work supervision;
- access specialist supervision appropriate and consistent with their practice;
- access supervision that is cognisant of cultural worldview, experience, skills and requirements for accountability;
- access supervision that is consistent with their spiritual, traditional and theoretical understandings that are congruent with their worldview;¹
- provide evidence of supervision;
- comply with mechanisms of agency accountability and where professional supervision that is appropriate to the experience or expertise of a practitioner is not available within an agency setting seek either peer or external opportunities for supervision; and
- be able to provide attestation and a contract for supervision at the time of undertaking competency requirements or Annual Practising Certificate renewal.

¹ Beddoe, L. and R. Egan (2009). *Social Work Supervision. Social Work Contexts and practice. Second Edition*. M. Connolly and L. Harms. Melbourne, Oxford University Press: 410-422

SUPERVISION EXPECTATIONS FOR REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKERS

5. Qualifications of Supervisors

The Board prefers that persons providing social work supervision will be registered social workers who have completed training in professional supervision and who practice in accord with accepted professional standards of experience and qualifications.

The Board also recognises that some senior and experienced or specialist practitioners may not have a supervisory relationship with another social work practitioner and in such cases the Board requirement is that the supervisor is able to evidence they provide supervision consistent with the Code of Conduct of the Board and also the generally accepted standards reflected in the Profession's Code of Ethics.