

Apart Together: Virtual Supervision Tips

The role of a family support professional supervisor is to support the healthy functioning of an organization, both by implementing best practices and promoting the well-being of staff. During these uncertain times, it is important for staff to know that although they may be apart, they are still together. Using technology, supervisors can connect with staff and help them to feel connected with each other and their families. As we consider how parallel processing functions in our organizations, we keep in mind that the way a supervisor supports and engages his or her staff will influence how staff support and engage families. Here are some tips for virtual supervision during the COVID-19 crisis.

Stay in touch: Create a sense of community and empowerment.

- **Check-in.** Regularly contact each staff member via phone call, text or video chat to check in and see how they are doing in the midst of the quarantine.
- **Reflective Supervision.** Continue your regular schedule with a focus on collaboration and reflection. Consider providing additional support, if needed.
- **Staff meetings.** The best online meetings include three essentials—connection, collaboration and feedback. These essentials will keep your staff engaged and the meeting productive.
 - Include a virtual game or icebreaker before jumping into your agenda items.
 - Use Rapid Response-Virtual Home Visiting (RR-VHV) collaborative resources and webinar recordings to guide discussion and decision-making: <https://institutebsp.org/covid-19-rapid-response>.
 - Delegate staff to become content experts in areas of interest to them and to share during meetings.
 - Record meetings and appoint a note taker to accommodate learning styles.
- **Informal meet ups.** Provide opportunities for staff to meet up virtually just to talk. One idea is to schedule a weekly virtual staff lunch.
- **Make your staff a priority!** Keep your appointments!

Stay connected: Distance doesn't mean disconnected.

- **Connect, reflect, and agree.** Determine how you can best connect (video platform or phone), reflect on potential challenges and opportunities, and agree to be prepared and engage mutually. Establish meeting norms and give some grace!
- Use the *IVC Virtual Service Delivery Checklist* and *Troubleshooting Tips for IVC Virtual Service Delivery* to prepare the professional and yourself for an optimal experience.
- **When possible, use video.** Facial expressions and non-verbal communication are important.
- **Make the experience interactive.** Connect by looking into the camera to make “eye contact.”

- **Be OK with silence.** Time is needed for thinking, processing and responding.
- **Make it fun!** Give a virtual tour of your new home office and let them do the same.

Stay aware: Don't just look, watch. Don't just hear, listen.

- **Read the cues and respond.**
 - Truly listen. Pay attention to the emotion that is being expressed in the tone of voice and facial expressions.
 - Express empathy. Acknowledge fears, frustration, and worries.
- **Be curious.** Go beyond the impact of the crisis on their work.
 - What does this current experience mean for the individual?
 - What additional stressors do they have in their lives right now?
- **Maintain self-awareness.**
 - Take time to reflect on your own reaction to the behaviors and needs of others.
 - What assumptions are being made?
 - What support do you need?

Stay informed: Knowledge is power.

- Read RR-VHV resources, webinar recordings, and CDC guidance to understand what is recommended for virtual service delivery: <https://institute4sp.org/covid-19-rapid-response>.
- When the resources available do not fully meet your needs, contact: rapidresponse@nationalalliancehvmmodels.org for additional support.
- Communicate regularly with your administrators and funders to clarify expectations.

Stay real: Authentic leadership creates a positive environment, motivated staff, innovative practices and greater risk-taking.

- **Lead from the front in confidence and honesty.** Admit that you don't know everything. This is a time of change so you aren't expected to know everything.
- **Be open and transparent.** Share your feelings.
- **Check in on yourself.** Pay attention to your emotions and needs.
- **Take care of yourself.** Seek support and connection. You can't pour from an empty cup!

References

- Ramirez, N. (2020). *Conducting effective virtual 1:1's with employees: A leader's quick take*. Cited in *The 3 r's of leading through uncertainty*. [Webinar]. Retrieved on April 2, 2020, from www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMHnhDWCBsY.
- Miro. (n.d.). *16 secrets of engaging remote meetings*. [Blog post]. Retrieved on April 8, 2020, from www.miro.com/blog/engaging-remote-meetings/.

"Do unto others as you would have others do unto others." - Jeree Pawl