

Virtually Supervising Child Welfare Professionals During a Pandemic

During the pandemic crisis, supervisors must consistently engage their staff and assess caseworker needs and the needs of families served by the child welfare system. The following strategies help support staff, encourage team cohesion, and ensure important work continues.



Meet Emotional Needs



- Set the tone.** Approach supervision with the highest degree of empathy. Give staff the flexibility to organize their personal and professional lives.
- Name it to normalize it.** Recognize many staff are now required to work from home. This brings additional stress to an already stressful job. Acknowledge that we are all struggling.
- Hold voluntary morning check-ins.** Ask about family and share something about yourself.
- Encourage connections.** Use chat, text, and online video for coffee breaks or happy hour.
- Assign peer buddies to layer mutual support.** Organize team members into pairs with each staff assigned as a peer buddy to their colleague to buffer against emotional isolation.

Meet Virtual Working Needs



- Recognize that working virtually is different for those who are required to be in the community.** Listen with compassion and leverage agency protocols and resources to help staff practice physical distancing whenever possible. succeed in the virtual workspace.
- Encourage staff to do a telework self-assessment.** Use the assessment to tailor supervision.
- Share tips to increase effectiveness of and comfort with working virtually.** Encourage staff to establish a daily routine that sets boundaries between “work” and “home.”
- Define expectations and set realistic goals, adjusting work as necessary.** Establish a virtual working agreement with each person you supervise.

Meet Communication Needs



- Communicate regularly with your staff.** Be available for impromptu conversations on case-related matters and supportive supervision.
- Establish consistent check-ins with each person you supervise.** Increase the number and length of check-ins. Ask how the person is managing and how you can help. Help the person feel valued and appreciated and emphasize work-life balance.
- Use an online/virtual meeting platform.** Use video conferencing to interact face-to-face and increase connections. Have an agenda and encourage candid discussion.

