

Maintaining Clear and Accurate Supervisory Records

As a supervisor for individuals requiring supervision to practice psychology (i.e., applicants, Licensed Psychological Associates, Provisional Licensed Psychologists), you may have grown comfortable and confident in your role. Once you became recognized by the Board as an appropriate contract supervisor and entered into a written agreement on a Supervision Contract Form with the Board specifying your responsibilities to the supervisee, it may have appeared that discussing cases and clinical issues was all that was left to do. If any changes occurred in the conditions specified in the contract, a new contract was developed, and a final supervision report for the old contract was filed with the Board. You were probably thinking that all of this seemed simple enough and that supervising others can be a very rewarding experience. Difficulties arise, however, when you, as the supervisor, have reason to believe that the supervisee is practicing in a manner which indicates that ethical or legal violations have been committed or when a complaint has been filed against the supervisee.

It is at those times that good documentation of supervision that you have provided is crucial. Clear and accurate records of supervision with the supervisee, as required by law, may be the only evidence of a supervisor's action in a time of trouble. Well-documented action by the supervisor can substantiate claims and/or protect against false claims made by a complainant. Whereas, poor documentation may lead to "finger pointing," and only increases the supervisor's vulnerability to the consequences of the supervisee's actions. Furthermore, inadequate documentation could constitute a legal violation by the supervisor and may lead to disciplinary action against the supervisor's license.

What does the Board consider to be a clear and accurate record of supervision?

Board Rule .2008(c)(8) requires various types of documentation of supervision sessions. The supervisor must document fees charged, the dates and appointment times of each supervision session, and the length of time of each session. In addition, there must be a summary content of each session that includes the following: (1) treatment issues addressed; (2) concerns identified by the supervisor and supervisee; (3) recommendations of the supervisor; and (4) the intended outcome for recommendations of the supervisor.

For how long must supervision records be maintained?

Board Rule .2001(c)(8)(C) specifies the following:

... Except when prevented from doing so by circumstances beyond the supervisor's control, the supervisor shall retain securely and confidentially the records reflecting supervision with the supervisee *for at least seven years from the date of the last session of supervision* (emphasis added) with the supervisee. If there are pending legal or ethical matters, or if there is otherwise any other compelling circumstance, the supervisor shall retain the complete record of supervision securely and confidentially for an indefinite period of time.

How important are supervisors?

Board Rule .2002 recognizes that supervisors, through the supervision process, play a critical role in assuring that appropriate professional standards of practice are applied to a client's problem, and that the laws governing the practice of psychology and the ethics that guide the practice are understood and followed by the supervisee. In addition, supervisors through that supervisory relationship must have an understanding of the supervisee's technical skills and level of competence, must maintain an awareness of the supervisee's utilization of supervision, and must be aware of whether the supervisee has the ability to function independently or with reduced supervision. Eventually, a final supervision report form must be completed by the supervisor, and this report provides the Board with information regarding the supervisee's level of performance in each of the above areas. Therefore, a clear and accurate record of supervision maintained over time by the supervisor can provide the supervisor the basis for that judgment as well as documentation if the judgment is disputed.

What should a supervisor do to maintain required documentation?

The North Carolina Psychology Board has developed a model documentation form that contains the components necessary for maintaining clear and accurate supervision records, along with the references for the applicable Board rules. The Board does not require supervisors to use the model form, but supervisors are welcome to do so if they wish. You may wish to compare the manner in which you maintain supervisory records with the Board form, and adapt your record keeping practices as appropriate.