



Collaborative practice in child and family welfare: Building practitioners' competence

18 March 2020 | Nicole Paterson, Toni Cash and Chloe Warrell

Comments

“ Supervision was mentioned during the presentation - do you have any experience of joint supervision between the statutory and non-statutory sectors and if so outcomes etc. I run reflective practice sessions across the region where I am located as part of my role as a way of engaging both sectors. My thinking is that the more we engage across the sectors the better the outcomes.

Peter Rademaker | 18 March 2020

“ Thanks for the great question, Peter. Both Chloe and I agree that the idea of joint supervision has great merit. Supervision underpins strong safe professional practice and joint supervision would definitely have the potential to enhance collaborative competence (and partnership) both at a systemic and an individual level. Our thinking would be that it would be very important to set this up well at the beginning and to make sure we apply a critical practice (and review) lens periodically. I have experience of doing this and there's a couple of key things I would say. I have split my responses into separate comments below (Parts A and B) to make it easier to read.

“ PART A: First, it's helpful to use good solid group agreements in your supervision (as I am sure you already do). We have some “bottom lines” for an agreement to cover off in my team who do this and these include:

1) Naming up the courage it takes to be vulnerable in sharing about our practice with others; and naming up why this is so critical in child protection work (wherever in the sector we are doing that work). We reference Eileen Munro's material about the vulnerability we have in this work to form a particular view about something and then hold to that view even when the evidence might tell us we need to think and work differently (that is me paraphrasing – not Eileen Munro's direct words!)

2) Covering off how we are going to deal with confidentiality. We have good legislation that enables us to be very open about information, but we still tend to see people with some thinking errors about confidentiality. It would be good to be very solid on what the issues are in your particular patch to be clear about that with your participants. I talk about ours as a football game – if we are here in this conversation we are all players in the game (administering our act) and so we can share any information we have. The information is like the football – we can all handle the information – but only for the purposes of THIS GAME. We don't toss it over the fence to another game and we don't toss it out into the stands. Only the players handle the football and follow the rules of the game.



3) Making sure we talk respectfully. We use a rule that we will talk about anyone who is NOT IN THE ROOM AS IF THEY WERE IN THE ROOM. This relates to anyone – the family, our colleagues who might not be there from partner agencies (police, detention centres for example, they may be at supervision but they may not be) AND we give permission for anyone to call that if we slip.

4) Making sure culture is accounted for in the room – we assign the role of allying to culture to more than just the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person in the room (with agreement of participants and particularly our colleagues and partners who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander).

5) We encourage the development of multiple hypothesis (about cases; relationships; resources – everything) and work with holding more than one possibility in the room.

“ PART B: Second, there are some structural things that can also help with this – so thinking about things like: 1) who authorises the supervision from different agencies – so that it is prioritised in work tasks and is seen as legitimate use of time; 2) how do we manage hierarchy (check hierarchy at the door) and power dynamics (Chloe and I spoke about those a bit the other day); 3) how do we resource this? A wonderful thing about partnerships is that we can often share resources – so someone might provide the room and someone else supports the technology and someone else does some of the admin supports – those sorts of things; 4) Structural review and reflection on how we are going with this and whether it is meeting a need still.

I don't know if there are many (any?) proper formal evaluations of outcomes in this area, but my own experience of it is consistently very positive. I hope that is helpful to you and to others who might be interested in this. I could go on and on about this, but that's a good start. And I look forward to this sort of conversation and pathway growing for us all over time.

Toni Cash | 2 April 2020

“ Is there any organisations similar to BEROS in Tasmania?

Tori | 24 March 2020

“ Hey Tori, Thanks for your question. BEROS is a Brisbane initiative and so far the only one in QLD (and Australia). Through my research and the research of others we have not yet been able to find a service that has a similar model. But that is not to say there aren't other services out there doing great work with a flexible and individual practice approach.

Chloe | 24 March 2020