COMMENTARY

The Training Needs and Interests of School Counseling Intern Site Supervisors

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School counseling site supervisors play a critical role in the clinical training of school counselor interns and are an important link between counselor education and professional practice. While it is a state requirement in California that school counselor site supervisors must be qualified, credentialed school counselors, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) along with both state and national school counselor organizations have not yet created specific standards or guidelines for the preparation and practice of this supervisor role. The absence of standards and detailed practice requirements for supervisors contributes to a high variability in the quality of field experiences for school counseling interns. In this study, we explored the supervision training among practicing school counselors in California who serve as site supervisors for interns, their supervision practices, and their interest in receiving training for the practice of supervision.

A 20-item questionnaire was designed to gather information such as length of professional practice, along with data on the supervision training, practice, and training interests of California school counselor site supervisors. Out of 1116 surveys sent, a total of 220 practicing school counselor site supervisors responded.

Forty-one percent of respondents felt "not at all" prepared by their counselor education program for their role as a site supervisor, and 30% felt only "somewhat" prepared. Eighteen percent felt prepared to a "moderate" extent and 8% felt prepared to a "great extent." The remaining 3% did not answer this question. When asked to describe the nature of supervision training received in their graduate education program, the majority of our sample (59%) informed us that this role was either not addressed at all or only indirectly addressed, while only 7% took one or more courses devoted to supervision. Outside of their graduate work, forty-eight percent have read books or articles related to supervision, 19% have attended a workshop on supervision at a professional conference, 13% participated in a training course on supervision, 12% have attended an in-service training about this role and 7% participated in a group focusing on supervision.

When asked if they receive regular supervision about their role as a supervisor, 78% replied that they do not. Of the 19% who do receive supervision about this role, half of those who are supervised on-site receive this supervision from school administrators who do not hold the Pupil Personnel Services Credential (PPSC). Interestingly, 7% (15) respondents reported that they seek an outside professional/mentor for such supervision, suggesting a lack of well-trained supervisors available in some schools. The majority (84%) indicated that they are interested in receiving supervision training. Most were interested in receiving a handbook for school counseling supervisors (63%), followed by a single session workshop at a local university (59%) or a conference on supervision (44%). Respondents also suggested the need for more collaboration with and support from university faculty.

We also gathered information about counselor-to-student ratios and supervision practices, types of university contact and internship plan development, supervision practices pre- and post-ASCA model (American School Counselor Association), and recommendations about ways that respondents would like to be supported in their supervisory role. Details of those results can be found in our full article.

School counselor education programs are called upon to take a leadership role in addressing this need for site supervisor training by identifying and evaluating supervision models appropriate for the complex role of the school counselor, and advocating for increased clarity in the state standards as well as those recommended and published by state and national associations. It will take the collaborative efforts of counselor educators, state credentialing programs, professional associations, and practicing school counselors to move this much-needed initiative forward.

The full study is in Gail E. Uellendahl and Maya N. Tenenbaum, "Supervision Training, Practices, and Interests of California Site Supervisors," Counselor Education & Supervision, 54, 274-287.

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