

WHEN SHOULD I SEEK SUPERVISION?

What is professional and peer supervision?

Professional and peer supervision is a critical component of a psychologist's practice, offering a structured learning and professional development environment. Supervision involves regular meetings with more experienced professionals (professional supervision) or colleagues at a similar level of experience (peer supervision) to discuss clinical cases, ethical dilemmas, and personal reactions to clients.

How much do I need when generally registered every year?

The Psychology Board of Ahpra requires all psychologists to undertake a minimum of 10 hours of supervision per year that is focused on their own practice. This needs to be logged, and information needs to be provided about what was covered, what actions need to be undertaken, what education or skills need to be developed ongoing, and the name of the person who supervision was with. Group or individual supervision is accepted, but only the time you spend focused on your own practice counts toward the 10 hours required each year. If you do not complete these 10 hours each year, you risk disciplinary action from Ahpra, which may include additional training or supervision or a period of de-registration in rare cases.

What are the benefits?

- This process allows psychologists to explore common therapeutic issues such as transference and countertransference, gaining insight into how their own emotions and biases might affect their clinical work.
- Supervision supports psychologists in maintaining the standards of the profession. It provides essential clinical oversight and support, ensuring that psychologists' work adheres to professional standards and that they are using the most effective and ethical practices.
- Fosters continuous learning and helps psychologists to stay updated with the latest developments in their field.
- Supervision offers a safe space for psychologists to work through the emotional challenges that arise from their work.
- Protection against vicarious trauma and burnout. Dealing with clients' trauma, stress, and emotional pain can be taxing, and supervision helps mitigate these effects by providing emotional support and strategies to manage this occupational stress.
- It improves the psychologist's well-being but also enhances the quality of care provided to clients.
- Supervision encourages reflective practice, where psychologists can critically analyse their work, recognise improvement areas, and celebrate successes, ultimately leading to professional satisfaction. The primary purposes of supervision are to '...identify core psychology practice competencies, formulate competency models for guiding future training, and develop means by which self-reflective competency-based education, a portal to lifelong learning, and an essential part of research and implementation...' (von Treuer, & Reynolds, 2017).

WHEN SHOULD I SEEK SUPERVISION?

Supervision is recognised as essential to high-quality practice and to the development of psychologists and health professionals.

Objectives of supervision:

Three broad objectives of supervision are identified in the literature: normative, restorative, and formative (Milne & Watkins, 2014).

- Normative – matters pertaining to managerial tasks of supervision that support ethical practice and compliance with agency regulations such as Medicare, NDIS or WorkCover.
- Restorative – activities that aim to facilitate clinician skill development, increase clinician knowledge about topics in clinical practice, and support professional identity development.
- Formative - provision of supports that promote clinician well-being, reduce burnout, and enhance job satisfaction.

Outcomes or goals that generally result from supervision include achieving professional competencies, capability, a sense of professional identity, and the obtaining of a professional qualification or award. Clinical supervision is designed to foster the development and enhancement of therapeutic competence in supervisees. (Milne & Watkins, 2014).

Why is it important?

Failing to engage in professional and peer supervision can have significant negative consequences for psychologists.

- Without this support, psychologists may experience professional isolation, lacking the collegial interaction that helps validate and challenge their perspectives.
- This isolation can contribute to burnout, as psychologists face the emotional demands of their work alone, without the necessary support to process these experiences.
- Additionally, without regular supervision, there is a heightened risk of poor work practices developing, as psychologists might not receive feedback on their clinical techniques or ethical considerations, leading to suboptimal client care.
- The absence of supervision can create gaps in knowledge, as psychologists miss out on opportunities to learn from others' experiences and expertise.
- This lack of continuous professional development can result in outdated or less effective treatment approaches, potentially compromising client outcomes.
- Additionally, psychologists who do not participate in supervision might struggle with unrecognised issues, which can distort the therapeutic relationship and impede progress.

Ultimately, the absence of supervision undermines the psychologist's professional growth and the quality of care they provide, emphasising the critical need for regular professional and peer supervision in clinical practice.