

# Models of Supervision

Part of my role as Academic Fieldwork Coordinator is to call facilities and try to secure slots for our students to complete Level I and Level II experiences. With the average of 25 students per class and two classes in any given calendar year, our program requires 100 fieldwork placement slots per year!

Sometimes when speaking to therapists, the discussion turns to concerns of not having enough time to properly supervise a student due to part-time or PRN status or rotations through a variety areas or settings of a facility. In some cases, it is very difficult for a therapist to commit to the typical *one student - one therapist* for an entire fieldwork as we have been used to. As the OT environment changes, we too have changed what we expect for fieldwork supervision and hopefully can address these concerns with alternative models of supervision. The following models have been used successfully in fieldwork experiences with our students and across the country. Consider if one of these models might help you meet your productivity and time management needs as well as afford you the opportunity to supervise a student as we educate and grow our profession. If you would like further information on any of these models, I would be glad to provide detailed tip sheets containing a *Description of the Model, How it Works, Strategies for Success, Role of Fieldwork Educator, Role of Student, Role of University, and Advantages of the Model*.

## 1:1

This is the typical model of supervision in which one student is paired with one fieldwork educator for the entire experience. The student consults with this one fieldwork educator for guidance, direction, and feedback throughout the time in the setting. Advantages: The student and fieldwork educator become partners in education and there is more opportunity for a closer working relationship with reflection and discussion.

## 1:2

This model is one student assigned to two different fieldwork educators for the experience. The student divides his/her time between two fieldwork educators who work in either the same or different areas of practice. The student may be simultaneously assigned to two fieldwork educators for the entire fieldwork placement or may spend half the placement with one educator and then be transferred to another educator for the second half. Important factors are good communication between the two fieldwork educators and between the fieldwork educators and the student, and the consistency of performance expectations. Advantages: Students may get to experience a variety of practice areas; provides more therapists the opportunity to serve as educators regardless of part-time/full-time/PRN status; fewer demands on therapist's time and workload.

## 2:1 or 3:1 (Collaborative Model)

This model of supervision, 2 or 3 students to one fieldwork educator in a specific area or setting, is called the *Collaborative Model* and is gaining in popularity. Typically these students are at the same level in their academic classes. The model promotes learning from each other as well as the

educator and improves peer teaching, critical thinking and problem solving. Students have the opportunity to share knowledge and ideas with each other and to reflect on experiences together. The fieldwork educator is the expert who oversees and ensures good quality therapy. Advantages: Students take more responsibility for learning and peer support; students can share travel expenses; emphasizes teamwork, communication, and interactions between students and with staff.

### **Full-time Student: Part-time Educator**

This model is also being used more often as facilities and therapy departments utilize more part-time or PRN therapists. The student is paired with a fieldwork educator who works part-time or works in two different settings where only part of the caseload may be suitable for educating a student. The student consults with this educator for skill learning, reflection on practice, and guidance in that particular setting. When the educator is not on-site, the student can continue with the caseload with other staff responsible for consultation, participates in learning opportunities with other facility staff (non-OT), or spends time on projects, program planning, or research while maintaining a backup plan that provides for contact with the therapist for urgent situations. Advantages: Allows part-time or split site therapists the opportunity to supervise a student. The student gains from more independent learning and problem solving due to part-time supervision.

### **The Group Model**

This model of supervision involves a group of 2-6 students supervised by one or more fieldwork educators for the same experience. The students work together to plan their learning experience rather than depending solely on the fieldwork educator(s). Each student is assigned clients who he/she is responsible for individually and shared clients who are the responsibility of the student group. Students are expected to consult with one another when questions arise. Students share knowledge and ideas with each other and to reflect on experiences together. The fieldwork educator(s), however, is the expert who oversees and ensures good quality therapy and expert intervention. Advantages: Allows part-time or several therapists the opportunity to supervise students; students take responsibility for learning, provide peer support, and companionship.

### **Part-Time Fieldwork**

The student completes the fieldwork on a part-time basis over a longer period of time. Some students want to complete a fieldwork on a part-time basis due to family issues or the need to continue outside employment and a fieldwork educator wants a student on a part-time basis due to limited hours or days available in the clinic. Fieldwork can be completed for part-time hours per day or fewer days per week, depending on the situation. Advantages: The part-time therapist can have the opportunity to supervise a student and a student can choose to do part-time hours if it fits their personal life situation better; provides more flexibility to both and gives the therapist down-time from student education.