



# Position Statement

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## SUPERVISION IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

Supervision of educators is essential to school improvement and student success. Through professional supervision, the practices of administrators, teachers, and support personnel are observed, monitored, and evaluated to ensure implementation of appropriate and up-to-date services. The roles and functions of school psychologists are summarized in the NASP Practice Model and related documents (e.g., NASP position statements). Supervision serves to protect the public and improve educational outcomes (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Therefore, it is essential that all school practitioners have access to knowledgeable professional supervision.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) strongly promotes the professional supervision of school psychologists by school psychologists at all levels of practice (e.g., student, intern, early career, and expert) as a means of ensuring effective practices to support the educational attainment of all children. Supervisors who are both knowledgeable about and experienced in the delivery of school psychological services promote adherence to high standards; ensure appropriate, high quality services to children and youth; and provide appropriate evaluation of personnel.

### DEFINITION OF SUPERVISION

Supervision in school psychology includes both professional and administrative supervision. It is provided through an ongoing, positive, systematic, collaborative process between the school psychologist and the school psychology supervisor. This process focuses on promoting effective growth and exemplary professional practice leading to improved performance by all, including the school psychologist, supervisor, students, and the entire school community.

### TYPES OF SUPERVISION

**Professional supervision** refers to oversight of the specific professional practices of personnel within one's own profession, and requires specific training and knowledge in the area of supervision. Professional supervisors are responsible for supporting practices consistent with professional standards (NASP, 2010a) as well as ethical codes (NASP, 2010b). Professional supervisors are also responsible for promoting ongoing professional development to improve and update skills (NASP 2010d), and to ensure systems of personnel evaluation that are consistent with these professional standards (NASP, 2010c). These standards indicate that school psychologists should engage in continuing professional development in order to remain current regarding developments in research, training, and professional practices that benefit children, families, and schools. Professional skill development beyond that of the early career practitioner requires well-planned continuing professional development and professional supervision. As indicated in the Graduate Preparation Standards (NASP, 2010c), professional supervisors of practicum students and interns are responsible for all professional practices of their supervisees. Graduate students in school psychology require more

intensive supervision than those with many years of experience. Graduate students and interns are identified as such, and their work is cosigned by the supervising school psychologist (NASP, 2010c). Professional supervision is only provided by a licensed/certified school psychologist or by an individual holding an equivalent title (e.g., NCSP, school psychological service provider, school psychology specialist). Consistent with the intent of the NASP *Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists* (III.3.4), when supervision takes place in a setting other than public schools, provision of supervision may be by an individual holding the appropriate state psychology credential for practice in that setting (e.g., licensed psychologist; NASP, 2010c).

Professional supervisors must collaborate with administrative supervisors to ensure appropriate and ongoing evaluation of models of service delivery. NASP promotes access to both administrative and professional supervision for all school psychologists, regardless of work setting. Although an ideal situation would have professional supervision provided by individuals with administrative supervisory responsibility, NASP recognizes that different configurations of supervision will be necessary based upon available resources and organizational structure. Graduate students and interns must be supervised only by credentialed school psychologists who can provide professional supervision.

**Administrative supervision** focuses on the functioning of the service unit, including personnel issues, and legal, contractual, and organizational practices. Administrative supervision addresses the logistics of service delivery and performance of job duties in accordance with conditions of employment and assigned responsibilities, and is primarily concerned with outcomes and consumer satisfaction rather than discipline-specific professional skills. Administrative supervisors also monitor the work levels of employees and are available to solve problems when job expectations and personal factors conflict. Administrative supervision may be carried out by individuals trained and credentialed in school administration and not school psychology. Professionals who are not school psychologists can provide only administrative supervision.

## **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

NASP has adopted standards of service delivery including standards for supervision of practicum trainees and interns, new school psychologists, and experienced practitioners. These standards should guide service units in their implementation of supervision of school psychologists. As delineated in Organizational Principle 5, Supervision and Mentoring (*Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services*; NASP, 2010a), school psychological services units should ensure supervision of all levels of personnel in order to “ensure the provision of effective and accountable services.” NASP recommends that school systems provide and support the supervision of school psychologists by an appropriately credentialed and experienced school psychologist so that the development of professional skills is continued and maintained over time. School psychologists seek and use appropriate types and levels of supervision as they acquire new knowledge, skills, and abilities by creating and following a personal plan of professional development. NASP Standards address the qualifications of supervisors; the nature and frequency of supervision for practicum trainees, interns, new professionals, and experienced practitioners; and the supervisor’s leadership in developing and evaluating effective and accountable services. NASP promotes the implementation of these standards in all school psychological services units.

**Qualification of supervisors.** Supervisors have a valid state school psychologist credential for the setting in which they are employed, and have a minimum of 3 years of full-time experience as practicing school psychologists. Education and/or experience in the supervision of school personnel are desirable. Typically, supervision is provided by those with more experience for those with less, such that all school psychologists have access to supervision throughout their careers.

**Nature and frequency of supervision.** Supervision methods should match the developmental level of the school psychologist. Graduate students, interns, and early career school psychologists require more intensive supervisory modalities and hours of weekly support. As indicated in the Graduate Preparation Standards (NASP, 2010c), interns should receive an average of at least 2 hours of field-based supervision per full-time week. Additional time may be needed to review work products. The preponderance of the 2 hours should be provided on at least a weekly, individual, face-to face basis, with structured mentoring and evaluation that focus on the intern’s attainment of competencies. Some distance-based supervision, to supplement in-person supervision sessions, is acceptable, as part of an articulated program of supervision, and as the skills and development of the individual warrant. For at least their first postgraduate year of employment, school psychologists should participate in district-provided supervision or mentoring. Such induction experiences should be for the purpose of establishing a foundation for lifelong learning and professional growth. For initially credentialed school psychologists, participation in district-provided supervision and/or mentoring conducted either directly or indirectly is recommended for a minimum average of 1 hour per week (NASP, 2010d). More experienced school psychologists may utilize alternative methods, such as supervision groups, mentoring, and/or peer support to ensure continued professional growth and support for complex or difficult cases. For all school psychologists, school systems should allow time for school psychologists to participate in supervision and mentoring. In small or rural systems, where a supervising school psychologist may not be available, the school system should ensure that school psychologists are given opportunities to seek supervision and/or peer support outside the district (e.g., through regional, state, or national school psychologist networks).

Regardless of proficiency, practitioners require supervision whenever they enter situations in which they have no previous experience, either in terms of the population with which they are working, or with regard to the procedures and/or tools used. Supervisors of school psychologists should adjust their supervisory strategies according to the skill level of the supervisee. Novice and advanced beginners require frequent, direct supervision to enhance skill development to ensure appropriate and effective practice. Although requiring less frequent, more indirect supervision, school psychologists at the proficient and expert levels continue to engage in the supervision process to help maintain objectivity, choose appropriate methods of child advocacy, and continually upgrade skills. Expert and proficient school psychologists are themselves likely to supervise interns or other school psychologists, which requires development of their professional and administrative supervisory skills.

**Evaluation.** The school system should develop and implement a coordinated plan for the accountability and evaluation of all school psychological services, including supervision (see below). This plan should address evaluation of both implementation and outcomes of services.

## **SUPERVISION METHODS AND STRUCTURES**

Professional supervision techniques vary based on the supervisor’s ability to intervene and assist the supervisee or client, the reliance on technology, the amount of the supervisor’s time required, the level

of supervisee skill required, and the intrusion on the client. Because proximity and knowledge of school district personnel and policies are substantial advantages in providing supervision, it is most desirable for a supervisor to be an employee of the same school district as a supervisee. However, not all service units have access to full-time school psychologist supervisors. Alternative models can provide satisfactory professional supervision, including part-time supervisors, shared supervisors (collaboration among school districts or between districts and community agencies), peer supervision networks across and within districts, online supervision, and more. Individuals who do not hold a school psychologist credential should only provide administrative supervision. Professional supervision is only provided by a licensed/certified school psychologist or by an individual holding an equivalent title (e.g., NCSP, school psychological service provider, school psychology specialist).

## **TRAINING AND EVALUATION OF SUPERVISORS**

NASP strongly recommends that supervisors of school psychologists receive formal and/or informal training in supervision. It is recommended that beginning supervisors take coursework and participate in workshops in supervision and that all supervisors monitor their skills by self-applying supervisory techniques. Any skill areas in which the supervisor is not at the competent level may be problematic, and the supervisor therefore should access supervision, consultation, and collaboration from expert school psychologists to support supervisory responsibilities in these areas. All supervisors are encouraged to refer to NASP standards for supervision. These standards include requirements for ongoing preparation and development in supervision skills. Just as it is essential that practitioners and service units undergo periodic evaluation to ensure quality and effectiveness, NASP also urges service units to conduct evaluation of supervisors and the program of supervision. This should include both external and self-supervision to ensure that supervisors provide accessible, constructive support, monitoring, and feedback to practitioners in a manner that promotes professional development and effective service delivery.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Professional supervision is one means of addressing accountability for school psychologists. NASP recommends that all school psychological service units support the professional supervision of school psychologists by:

- Assigning one or more credentialed, experienced school psychologists responsibility for administrative and professional supervision of all staff school psychologists and interns;
- Providing, as needed, opportunities for experienced school psychologists to gain initial and ongoing training in professional supervision;
- Ensuring that all school psychologists have access to and support for receiving professional supervision and mentoring as appropriate to their levels of experience and expertise;
- Providing multiple avenues and methods for obtaining supervision; and
- Ensuring the periodic evaluation of supervisors and the program of supervision.

Further, NASP calls upon school psychology training programs to offer preservice training as well as continuing professional development in techniques and models of effective supervision.

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Adopted by the NASP Delegate Assembly on July 16, 2011.

Please cite this document as:

National Association of School Psychologists. (2011). *Supervision in School Psychology* (Position Statement). Bethesda, MD: Author.

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