Supervisor Forum: Managing Change
Summary of notes from 3 regions
January 26-27, 2022

MH/Cap: Herkimer 1, Albany 5, Broome 1, Clinton 1, Madison 1, Schenectady 1, Oneida 2, Delaware 1, Dutchess 3, Rensselaer 2, Sullivan 1, Orange 2 (21)

NYC: Schenectady 1, Ulster- 1, Morris Heights 3, Otsego 1, Staten Island 2, Corona 2, Washington Heights 1, Bushwick 1, CAMBA 2, Westchester 1, Brookdale 2, Sunset Park 2 (19)

CW: Herkimer 1, Buffalo 6, Steuben/Livingston 5, Chemung 2, Tioga 1, Jefferson 1, Niagara 1, Broome 3, Monroe 1, Cortland 1, Oswego 1, Wayne 1, Schenectady 1 (25)

Total: 65 (supervisors and a couple of PMs)

What types of changes have been challenging for you to manage as a supervisor?
- ❖ Staffing challenges are enormous in some sites with multiple staff leaving at the same time. In one site both the PM and the Team Leader are leaving at the same time. In another, there have been multiple PMs over a short period. This kind of mass exodus creates an "unrest" among those who stay. One supervisor said she has been with HFNY a long time and gone through a lot with staffing and program changes but for the first time, with all the resignations and other challenges, she is wondering "how am I going to hold all this?" Others said they are not even getting resumes when they post positions.
- ❖ Staff are leaving for jobs where there is far less paperwork and more money. Some have left for jobs where the money is less but the paperwork and other administrative stress is less than in HFNY. One supervisor said her long term staff say "Healthy Families just isn't fun anymore."
- ❖ When staff are out with Covid or their own child care issues, families don't want to talk to anyone else and we lose families. Staff have their own health challenges, some are experiencing long-term Covid.
- ❖ The impact of the pandemic on staffing at other organizations. We don't have the usual support network via other programs - our staff become more like case managers to make up for deficits at other agencies. One supervisor shared she is seeing this a lot with IPV and law enforcement not responding. (She has been talking with her PM and community about this.)
- ❖ The sheer volume of changes (policy, BPS, FROG)—all of them and on top of that—we're in a global pandemic. Navigating all these changes while we still have to meet all the targets of the program.
- ❖ With all the changes, trying to fit everything that needs to be covered into supervision without overwhelming staff or yourself.
- ❖ Too many different training links to figure out.

❖ Navigating your own biases and negative feelings about changes. Finding a balance between being empathic to staff and helping them get to a place where they can see it positively. But you have to get there yourself first. It's staff resistance but sometimes it's your own.
❖ Even positive change can be hard when it's not your choice to make the change.
❖ Boundaries can get blurry with virtual work, and when you add all this change, frustrations rise and people are not at their most professional in their responses.
❖ With virtual supervision, we can't really get the full picture of how someone is doing, we might be misinterpreting their body language. Masks make this really hard.

What have you done in the past that has helped your team successfully navigate changes?
❖ Keeping your own organizational culture in a positive place helps with weathering changes.
❖ Asking staff how they are feeling, even when they share something you don't want to hear, thanking them for sharing. Validating their feelings.
❖ Modeling positivity. How we frame the change makes a difference, our messaging.
❖ "Control your controllables."
❖ Know who you can turn to- your own supervisor or peer.
❖ Self-awareness that your initial reaction to the change may not be what you feel long term; keep perspective.
❖ Support from your PM to talk it through and figure it out together. Having a hands on PM who is "in it" with you.
❖ Forums like this that let you know you are not alone in feeling this way. Love these forums.
❖ Highlight how change forces us out of our comfort zone to try new things.
❖ The Serenity Prayer ("…grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.")
❖ When people get "testy" with you, remember they are reacting to the change and not to you as a supervisor.
❖ With everything going on, supervisors can get "knocked out of their resilience zone." Be sure to take care of yourself. If your cup is empty, you can't fill anyone else's. Another supervisor said, "HFNY is 'a lot of a lot'."
❖ Use Solution Focused Talk with changes and stressors- there is comfort in this approach that recognizes "We've been here before."

What have you found helpful in the way change was passed on to you, for example by HFNY, your agency, or a funder? Or, what do you wish they had done to facilitate a smoother change?
❖ Transparency. Sometimes we don't have a choice about a change but sharing information can cushion the impact.

- ❖ Having the larger organization be the "bad guy" about decisions that might be unfavorable to staff. I am there to support them to work it through but they know it wasn't my decision.
- ❖ Clear timelines so you can prepare people ahead of time.
- ❖ More FROG information from HFNY- one supervisor shared she finds it more helpful than what comes from HFA.
- ❖ Regarding the FROG- one site shared they are planning to do an in-service after everyone has taken the Hop Up to be sure everyone is getting the same interpretation from the training.
- ❖ Being supported to understand the intention of the change when it is presented helps you with your ability to embrace it, asking what is the true intention here?
- ❖ Sometimes policy changes are not communicated well from the host agency and it makes it hard as a supervisor to articulate them when you aren't really clear yourself.
- ❖ Ask direct service staff and families for their input. Shared power is important. Validating someone's negative feelings doesn't mean you're saying they don't have to do something.
- ❖ One supervisor shared asking all of their staff how they would like to receive information about changes. For example, some said they want a detailed email, some want a phone call.

Other ideas:
- ❖ One PM in attendance noted that PMs could use their own forum space.
- ❖ Several supervisors agreed they'd like FSS forums for their staff- this same type of format.
- ❖ Simon Sinak's Ted talks were recommended- Sinek's theory is that successfully communicating 'Why' taps into the part of the listener's brain that influences behavior.

Participants shared ideas for possible future forum topics:
Supporting families with autism
Virtual visits and curriculum
When to come back from virtual visits [and start with in person again]
Working with families with open CPS/ACS cases
How do you keep the HF focus (Education/parent child relationship) in your visits when the families are in great need in other areas.
Having difficult conversations with staff
Attracting new staff and retention, Virtual Onboarding might be a useful topic to exchange tips and tricks [several said they'd like to have a forum on these types of hiring issues]
Trauma informed topics to share with staff at supervision.
How to get staff (who have problems too) to park their "baggage" and focus on the family and not always their own personal comfort on the job.
Supporting team with connecting PF to BPS

I'd like to know more about what others do to prepare for supervisions with staff...some new, fresh ideas would be nice.
Team building skills and ideas racial equity/cultural humility/self-awareness
Creating additional tools for documenting Supervision case notes
How people make supervision notes "flow" like they did when we had them written vs the MIS

Other: A supervisor " retreat" like advanced training day with some breakout sessions maybe for an afternoon. Maybe a day after our deadlines.

Submitted: Ellen Butowsky January 31, 2021