

SUPPORTING AND TRAINING SUPERVISORS

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This chapter examines the role that front-line supervisors (FLSs) play in retaining direct support professionals (DSPs). It emphasizes the importance of supporting supervisors and ensuring that they have been adequately trained for their positions. The results of a comprehensive job analysis for FLSs who work in community services for people with disabilities are provided. This chapter identifies the competencies for which FLSs need training and suggests how organizations can develop effective job descriptions, training programs, and performance reviews using the information obtained in this job analysis. The strategies that one organization used to better support its FLSs are described. This chapter also includes sample FLS job descriptions, performance reviews, and a supervisor development self-assessment plan that organizations can use as a model as they develop these tools within their own organizations.

TARGETED FRONT-LINE SUPERVISOR COMPETENCIES

This chapter focuses on the need to train and develop supervisors to be effective in their roles. Consequently, all of the FLS competencies used throughout this book are related to this chapter.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

FLSs have one of the most complex and difficult jobs in the field of community human services. They are responsible for the supervision of a workforce that is often under-trained and for which there is extremely high turnover and constant vacancies. In addition, supervisors often supervise people that they do not see on a regular basis who are working varied hours of the day and every day of the week. As a result, supervisors always have a group of new employees whom they are responsible to train. Supervisors also work direct support shifts when replacement employees cannot be found.

Many supervisors report that they were promoted to being a supervisor because they were good at doing direct care but also report that they were ill-prepared to be effective supervisors (Larson, Sauer, Hewitt, O'Neil, & Sedlezky, 1998). Organizations often do not have effective training programs for supervisors, which results in supervisors' feeling that they were thrown in with little training and support and that they learned through trial and error. However, perhaps the best offense and defense in

battling the workforce challenges related to direct support is having excellent supervisors who know what they are supposed to do and who are supported in their jobs. This chapter provides suggestions and tools to assist organizations to better prepare, support, and value FLSs. It highlights the contributions FLSs make to improving turnover and vacancy rates in their organizations as well as improving the overall quality of the services provided by creating and developing employees who are effective and do a good job.

RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR SOLUTIONS

FLSs play a critical role in hiring, training, retaining, and supporting DSPs. They are essential to realizing the goals, purposes, and potential of community services (Barry Associates, 1999; Cohen, 2000; Hewitt, Larson, & Lakin, 2000; Lakin, Bruininks, Hill, & Hauber, 1982; Larson, Lakin, & Hewitt, 2002; Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Services Division, 2000; Test, Solow, & Flowers, 1999). Few studies of DSP workforce challenges acknowledge this reality. Research, however, suggests that settings with relatively inexperienced FLSs have higher DSP turnover rates (Larson, Lakin, & Bruininks, 1998). Furthermore, two of the most frequently cited reasons by DSPs for leaving their positions relate to effective supervision: 1) difficulties in getting along with co-workers and 2) conflicts with supervisors (Larson, Lakin, & Bruininks, 1998).

Three focus groups with a total of 41 FLSs examined the question of what does and does not work in orientation, training, and supporting supervisors (Larson, Sauer, et al., 1998). Table 11.1 summarizes the orientation that these supervisors were given. Supervisors reported receiving various kinds of orientation and training. Many reported that they taught themselves because no orientation was provided. Others reported that a mentor helped them through their initial months on the job. A few attended formal training provided either by their organization or by an outside entity. In-service training opportunities tended to be based on self-study or on courses offered through colleges or provider groups. Some supervisors reported getting an allowance for their own training, whereas others reported a lack of money for training.

Supervisors and managers who had access to mentors and networking reported that these were the most helpful components of orientation. Supervisors who did not have mentors or networking opportunities frequently reported that they had little support in learning what they were supposed to do and that this lack of support was their biggest problem. Other issues for supervisors included a lack of training opportunities and an overwhelming amount of information to take in very quickly.

When asked what worked about in-service education and training, supervisors reported liking networking opportunities, opportunities to practice using the information learned, and training provided outside the organization (Larson, Sauer, et al., 1998; see also Table 11.2). A number of effective and useful training practices were identified by FLSs. These include being paired with experienced peers and having refresher courses on certain topics. Features of in-service education that supervisors

Table 11.1. Orientation for supervisors and managers

What worked?	What did not work?
Having access to mentors	Being thrown in to sink or swim
Having access to training resources	Administrator saying, "Here are your keys."
Using cross-peer support	Taught self
Having experience in the human services	Using organization-developed training with no outside guidelines
Receiving good support from direct support professionals	Receiving disciplinary action while still in training
Having support of immediate supervisor	Having training content that did not match the job
Knowing whom to call	Not having administrative support to accomplish tasks taught in training
Receiving help from mentors when needed	Being held to overly high expectations
Networking with people in same position	Getting too much information at once
Networking with supervisors in different organizations	Not being told what the job tasks were (if they had told me, I would have done it)
Using step system that identifies what to learn when	Just being given a set of keys and job description
Using trial and error	Not having training across all categories of job duties
Using interactive training	Receiving supervisory training that was not specific enough to actual job tasks
Mentors who explained how to do things	Not receiving ongoing support for clarification
Networking with other supervisors	Receiving training that did not accommodate individual learning styles
Purposeful on-the-job learning	Not being given enough resources to do or get training
Training from person who previously held the position	Being given policies to read
Work experience in human services	Receiving only training required by regulations
State-offered supervision and management courses	Not receiving training about new types of services
	Using interactive training

From Larson, S.A., Sauer, J., Hewitt, A., O'Neil, S., & Sedlezky, L. (1998). *SOS training and technical assistance project for direct support professionals, trainers and frontline supervisors* (pp. 39–40). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living; adapted by permission.

did not like included poor trainers who did not gear training to adult learners, poor-quality materials, and training on topics that were not important.

STRATEGIES FOR RESPONDING TO THE PROBLEM

Organizations can use several important strategies to better support their FLSs to be effective at their job roles. The following sections provide an overview of many of these important considerations and interventions.

Define Supervisors' Roles and Responsibilities

One of the most important strategies that organizations can use to better support their FLSs is to clarify their roles and responsibilities. This can be done through using job analyses, creating purposeful job descriptions that clarify responsibilities, finding a balance between supervisory and direct support duties, limiting multisite responsibil-

Table 11.2. In-service training for supervisors and managers

What worked?	What did not work?
Combination of off- and on-site training	Patronizing or condescending trainers
Follow-up after training for implementation	Training consisting solely of participants talking to each other
Networking opportunities	Training with no practical application
Training selected based on own wants and needs	Poor or ineffective trainers
Opportunity to use what was learned in training and see it work	Training that is not geared toward adult learners
Incentive program for continuing education or college credit based on criteria	Training content that is read to participants
Peer-recommended training	Training that is only offered at one time
Time during training to practice and apply what was learned	Poor-quality printed materials
Training from outside agency	Reading manuals, reports, and books
Training outside of industry (e.g., human resources development and management training from college or private industry)	Role playing
Funds (based on percentage of salary) devoted to training	High costs for training
Stipend for outside training	Training sessions that are too far away or that are too short to travel so far
Training that offers concrete examples and strategies	Training sessions that are too long
Videos for busy people	Repeated training with no variety
Permitting selection from opportunities listed in quarterly newsletter	Schedule driven by regulations and money
Ideal	Training for one or two supervisors who then train the others
Pairing new with experienced supervisors for 2–4 weeks for training and rule review	
Resources and support staff to cover participant's job duties during training	
Refreshers on issues when needed	

From Larson, S.A., Sauer, J., Hewitt, A., O'Neil, S., & Sedlezky, L. (1998). *SOS training and technical assistance project for direct support professionals, trainers and frontline supervisors* (pp. 39–40). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living; adapted by permission.

ities, and providing added incentives for FLSs who end up working nonscheduled direct support shifts.

Use Job Analysis

As described in Chapter 6, a job analysis is a careful exploration and rich description of the role that a specific group or category of people have in a given job. For FLSs, a job analysis describes what they actually do and what they should do on the job. This differentiation between what they do and what they should do is important because often FLSs are so busy managing crises and responding to other workforce problems (e.g., creating schedules, filling vacancies, providing direct support because of vacancies) that they never get time to do other more critical tasks (e.g., supporting and training new employees, observing employees and providing performance, communicating

in person with DSPs). A job analysis for FLSs also describes the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes that community human services supervisors need to be effective.

Researchers at the University of Minnesota created a comprehensive job analysis to identify the critical competencies and performance indicators for FLSs working in Minnesota (Hewitt, Larson, O'Neil, Sauer, & Sedlezky, 1998). This analysis was one of the first completed within community human services for the FLS position and is currently the subject of a national validation study (Doljanac, Larson, Hewitt, & Salmi, 2004). This FLS job analysis details the broad competency areas and specific skills required of FLSs (see Figure 1 in the Introduction; for information on how to obtain a copy of this job analysis, refer to the Resources section in this chapter). This job analysis provides insight into the vastly varied roles and responsibilities of FLSs. Although not every single supervisor has all of these job duties, most do.

Provide Clear Job Expectations and Descriptions

Organizations need to work hard to let FLSs know exactly what they are expected to do in their jobs. Most job descriptions do not provide sufficient detail for employees to understand everything they need to know or be able to do. Basing job descriptions on a comprehensive job analysis can be helpful in ensuring that employees know what is expected of them. A sample job description for FLSs in community human services appears at the end of this chapter. This sample may not accurately reflect the role and duties of all FLSs, but it can give organizations ideas on what to include in their FLS job descriptions.

In addition to describing exactly what the duties of a position are, organizations should let FLSs know exactly how their competence and skills will be evaluated. Using a job analysis to guide this assessment and evaluation ensures that the assessment and evaluation measure actual FLS job tasks. A sample Front-Line Supervisor Performance Assessment is also provided at the end of this chapter.

Create Balance Between Direct Support and Supervisory Roles

The job analysis results presented in *The Minnesota Frontline Supervisor Competencies and Performance Indicators* (Hewitt et al., 1998) indicate that supervisors have a complex and often difficult job. One of their broad areas of responsibility includes providing direct support to the people who are supported by the organization. Supervisors must demonstrate that they are willing and able to provide direct support. Modeling of excellent direct support skills is essential for FLSs during effective training of DSPs and is valuable in gaining the respect and trust of DSPs and the individuals supported and their family members. At the same time, being able to provide direct support is only 1 of the 14 competency areas mentioned in the job analysis. To expect that supervisors can complete all of their supervisory duties and still provide 20–30 hours per week of direct support across multiple sites is unrealistic. Unfortunately, that is the expectation for far too many FLSs and contributes substantially to their burnout and to turnover rates of 27% (Hewitt, Larson, & Lakin, 2000) in these positions. Organizations can employ several strategies to balance the number of supervisory and direct support hours an FLS works (see Table 11.3).

Table 11.3. Balancing supervisory work with direct support work for front-line supervisors (FLSs)

Be realistic in estimating the percentage of time FLSs need to spend on duties other than providing direct support. Limit the number of routinely required direct support hours to no more than 10–15 per week.

Have a pool of regular, full-time floater employees who can work across multiple sites and fill last-minute vacancies. These positions should be coveted positions within the organization, and, if possible, people who work in these roles should be given an hourly augmentation to their base pay for being willing to put in hours without a predetermined schedule.

Pay FLSs overtime or augment their salaries when they work unscheduled direct support shifts. This will provide an incentive to FLSs to complete their other supervisory duties in any given week so that they can dedicate any time left over to working direct support hours at a higher rate of pay.

Limit Multiple Site Responsibilities

As community human services settings have become more decentralized, the number of smaller community services organizations has dramatically increased. When services were provided in large congregate care settings, all of the employees for which supervisors were responsible worked in the same location during set shifts. Now, more often than not, supervisors guide and direct the work of DSPs working in many locations at many different times of day and days of the week. Obviously, when employees do not work in the same place as the supervisor, the challenges of overseeing these employees are greater. Some DSPs have indicated that they rarely if ever even see their supervisor (Larson, Lakin, & Bruininks, 1998). Many state that the reason they leave their positions is poor or limited supervision.

Certainly the costs associated with delivering effective services and the amount of funding an organization receives to a large extent dictate how organizations distribute supervision responsibilities. But, organizations need to consider certain important factors and can put supports in place to maximize supervisor efficiency and effectiveness, even when supervisors are responsible for multiple sites. Organizations should reduce or limit the number of locations or sites for which a supervisor is responsible. Although there is no magical maximum number of sites, some supervisors and managers have indicated to us in focus groups and training sessions that handling more than two or three sites becomes overwhelming. Capping the number of sites can reduce burnout among supervisors because they spend much less time traveling between sites and thus have more time to spend in person supporting the employees they supervise.

When an FLS is responsible for more than two or three sites, it is important for the organization to do a careful analysis of job duties and create a lead employee position in each site to take on many of the responsibilities that might otherwise be given to the FLS. Some of the job tasks that could be delegated to this lead staff person include

- Scheduling
- Filling open shifts when others are not available
- Arranging transportation
- Scheduling appointments
- Performing site-specific maintenance and upkeep

- Completing paperwork
- Doing specific liaison work and making routine contact with family members and support team members
- Scheduling training
- Reviewing and submitting time cards for payroll

These duties are not involved with direct supervision and can greatly relieve the burden on FLSs, freeing up precious time for them to guide and direct the work of DSPs and evaluate and provide feedback to DSPs on their effectiveness.

In addition to delegating responsibilities and relieving job stress caused by FLSs' having too many duties, organizations can assist FLSs in managing multiple sites or locations in other ways. Although in-person interaction between supervisors and employees is important, supervisors managing multiple sites need efficient ways to connect with all of their employees. Supervisors need technology that makes it convenient to interact several times a week with each employee they supervise so that they can keep in touch between times that they see each other face to face. Organizations need to support the use of internal computer networks and ensure that all employees have access to e-mail. E-mail can be a quick and effective way for supervisors to connect with their employees across locations. Supervisors could also greatly benefit from cellular telephones so that their employees can reach them on the first try. Often employees spend much time trying to track their supervisor down by calling different sites or by calling a pager and waiting for their supervisor to return their call. More immediate and available communication can go a long way in helping DSPs feel connected to and supported by their supervisor. Last, ensuring that supervisors have portable computers is important so that when supervisors move from location to location, they have access to all of their work-related computer files. Often supervisors are forced to be inefficient because they need to handwrite or type documents or need to use a centralized computer.

Offer Incentives for Extra and Unexpected Direct Support Work

Supervisors have to complete many essential tasks and duties, such as scheduling work shifts, providing guidance and support to DSPs, interacting with families, scheduling appointments, and ensuring that staff are trained. Yet, because of high DSP turnover and vacancy rates, supervisors often have to work direct support shifts so that enough staff are on duty providing supervision and support to the people receiving services. In fact, some supervisors report that they often work as many as 20–40 hours of direct support per week. In addition, they spend inordinate amounts of time trying to find staff to fill shifts. Without incentives to work these extra hours, many supervisors burn out.

Often supervisors are salaried employees. They quickly realize that if they were working as a DSP, they would be making much more money for the number of hours that they put in because they would be paid overtime. They also would have far fewer headaches in terms of regular supervisory duties and the hassles that accompany having to fill open shifts. This not only discourages supervisors and causes burnout, it also discourages DSPs from applying for open supervisory positions because they may be unwilling to work long hours without being able to earn overtime pay.

To address this problem, organizations should identify ways to provide incentives to supervisors for the many hours of extra direct support they work. Some organizations pay their supervisors an hourly rate for the hours they work in a direct care role beyond their 40 supervisory hours per week. Other organizations identify other forms of incentives such as offering gift certificates for shifts worked or points to redeem for a week's stay at a local inn. The type of incentive is not as important as the acknowledgment that the organization recognizes that the supervisor is working hard and expending extra energy for the betterment of the people supported. We caution organizations not to offer comp time as an incentive for supervisors unless organizations are committed to making it possible for supervisors to use the comp time within 30–60 days. Supervisors often do not have the opportunity to take the time off because of limited staff and numerous vacancies.

Proactively Cultivate a Cadre of New Supervisors

FLS turnover rates average around 27% (Hewitt, Larson, & Lakin, 2000; see Table 1.11 and Chapter 1 for more information on FLS turnover). This means that in any given calendar year more than one fourth of all FLSs who were at a site at the beginning of the year were no longer there at the end of the year. Organizations are constantly looking for new supervisors. The most important ways for organizations to proactively address this need are to find capable and competent people to bring into FLS positions; to support and train these individuals on how to be effective supervisors, preferably before they become supervisors; and to develop mentoring programs and support networks so that FLSs can interact with other FLSs both within and outside of the organization in which they are employed.

Find New Supervisors

Organizations can find new supervisors from within the organization or from outside the organization. Obviously promoting DSPs from within the organization provides opportunities for DSPs to see that they are not in dead-end jobs and that career paths exist for them. The risk with promoting from within is that DSPs may not get sufficient training regarding their roles and responsibilities as FLSs. Often because a DSP has worked for the organization, knows its practices, and has observed supervisors in action, the organization assumes that the DSP will be a good supervisor right away and fails to provide training to support the person's new role. Making the transition from DSP to FLS can also be a challenge for some DSPs because they may end up supervising people who used to be their peers.

To be successful, organizations must anticipate the need for new supervisors and provide leadership development and training opportunities for existing DSPs before an opening occurs. DSPs who are interested in moving into supervisory positions need to know how to be effective supervisors before they take on this role. The more skills training organizations can offer in FLS competency areas, the better prepared promoted DSPs will be in handling the challenges they will face as a new supervisor.

Recruiting new supervisors from outside the organization is sometimes necessary but is less preferable to developing internal candidates. Bringing in new supervisors

from outside of the organization can cause existing DSPs to feel as if they have no opportunities and have been overlooked for such positions. Recruiting supervisors from outside requires the new supervisors not only to learn basic supervision skills and job duties but also to learn about the new organization and its policies, procedures, organizational norms, and culture. Sometimes when change is needed in the culture of a specific site or group of sites, however, an external candidate may be a better choice because the person will have less of a negative perception of the organization to overcome.

Whether a new supervisor is developed from within or hired from outside, it is critical to provide a realistic job preview (RJP) regarding that new position before the person makes a decision about the job (see Chapter 3 for more about RJP). During an RJP for a potential FLS, it is useful to have the person review a very detailed job description or competency list. Some organizations have used *The Minnesota Frontline Supervisor Competencies and Performance Indicators* (Hewitt et al., 1998) for this purpose. Although other information should also be provided (see Chapter 3 for ideas) to a person who is seriously considering a move to an FLS position, *The Minnesota Frontline Supervisor Competencies and Performance Indicators* or a similar version tailored to the organization can be a real eye opener about the nature and extent of FLS responsibilities.

Support and Train New Supervisors

Developing effective supports for new FLSs involves both orientation and socialization activities (see Chapter 5) and skills training activities (see Chapters 6 and 7). Even if a supervisor has worked in another role in the organization, there are enough differences in the roles of DSPs and FLSs that a new orientation is usually helpful. The tasks and routines that are specific to FLS positions should be introduced during the socialization process.

Organizations have many options about how to socialize new supervisors. For example, some organizations put together an orientation checklist that is specific to each job. The checklist asks the new supervisor to review the forms and processes he or she will be expected to use, read specific materials that describe the organization's management culture, and review computer software and templates that are used for the FLS role (e.g., payroll, scheduling, and other management tools). The checklist also identifies the people the new supervisor should meet with to learn about their new role. The orientation checklist may also include such tasks as working with the office manager to order business cards; reading *The New Supervisor: A Guide for the Newly Promoted, Third Edition* (Chapman, 1992); completing an FLS self-assessment and/or self-development plan such as the ones that appear at the end of this chapter; reading the last two reports completed by the previous supervisor on certain topics; and meeting with a human resources staff member to review basic employment laws. The organization may also find it helpful to provide a list of abbreviations and acronyms used by supervisors and managers in the organization, a list of the major projects that the new supervisor is responsible for, and a list of the most important tasks that the person needs to complete each week for his or her first 4 weeks. The FLS orientation checklist that we have used also includes this pointer for each week: "Ask a lot of questions if you need more information."

Develop Mentoring Programs and Support Networks

Peer mentoring programs and other forms of peer support can be helpful to new FLSs. Supervisors have reported that mentoring was one of the strategies that worked best (Larson, Sauer, et al., 1998). Often it is important for new employees to learn from others who are actually doing the same job. Observing others who are already competent can assist in building confidence and support for FLSs. When hiring new FLSs, organizations should partner them with existing FLSs for mentoring and support. See Chapter 8 for more information about developing a mentoring program and important considerations in doing so.

Regardless of whether a supervisor is new to the organization or has been promoted from within, providing transition time and overlap with the current supervisor before the position changes hands can prevent many problems. If that is not possible, it will be critical for the organization to be realistic about the amount of time it will take for the person to learn and be comfortable with his or her new role. During the transition time, providing additional staff support is important. For a supervisor who is new to the sites he or she is responsible for supervising, it will be important to have the person spend several days getting to know the individuals supported and the staff in those sites before taking on the supervision role.

Provide Ongoing Support to Supervisors

Although orientation and training for new supervisors are important, it is also important to provide ongoing support to them while they remain in supervisory roles. Organizations have many options for providing such support; these options are described next.

Give Supervisors Time to Connect and Share

Supervisors need the opportunity to share and connect with one another. In fact, most employees in professional roles need opportunities to network, share stories, and learn from others in similar roles. There are numerous ways in which an organization can provide these types of opportunities to its supervisors (see Table 11.4).

Encourage Cultural Competence

FLSs are expected to provide supervision to people from every imaginable cultural, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, linguistic, and religious background. As the population of the United States becomes more diverse and as more immigrants begin working in community human services, organizations will continually be broadening the diversity of their employee base. To effectively supervise a diverse group of employees, FLSs need to receive training and develop competencies related to working with diverse groups of people.

Hiring, training, and supporting employees who are new to the United States can provide new challenges to FLSs. Research has indicated that FLSs face certain challenges as they employ, train, and supervise these employees (Sedlezky et al., 2001):

- Differing communication styles
- Gender role differences

Table 11.4. Creating opportunities for front-line supervisors (FLS) to network

Provide at least 30–60 minutes before or after any organizational management meeting for FLSs to share information and network.
Develop and disseminate a list of internal experts on various topics. New supervisors can use this list to find out whom to call with questions on various aspects of their job.
Hold optional brown bag lunches for FLSs that are typically not attended by managers and administrators. Market these lunches as opportunities for FLSs to get together and celebrate their accomplishments and contributions with one another.
Create a chatroom or electronic message board on the organization’s computer network or web site for FLSs to check in with one another and share ideas.
Send out a weekly e-mail with tips and strategies to support FLSs. This e-mail should be created by FLSs.
Seek input from FLSs or assign a group of them to develop a networking day to provide development and support specifically to FLSs in the organization.
Have managers establish routine lunch or dinner gatherings for the FLSs they supervise to provide networking and sharing opportunities.
Support an FLS networking group across all of the human services organizations in your community. This offers FLSs in your organization the opportunity to learn new strategies and ideas from other FLSs.

- Different experiences with and understanding of disabilities and disability service provision
- Differing cultural norms regarding work roles and expectations
- Different understandings of home making and other aspects of direct support

Although supervisors identified these differences as being difficult to deal with, these supervisors, over time and with the right support, were able to effectively supervise, support, and capitalize on the unique contributions of people from diverse backgrounds.

Hiring employees from diverse backgrounds brings a number of benefits to the organization. By expanding and effectively supporting this pool of potential DSPs, organizations can reap the rewards of a diversified workplace, such as the following:

- Attracting and retaining talented people, thus reducing the costs associated with recruitment and turnover
- Meeting the needs of diverse consumers
- Using creative and flexible problem solving that comes from different perspectives
- Providing a work environment that is welcoming to all employees

It is important for FLSs to develop an understanding of cultural competence and how to promote cultural competence in themselves, the DSPs they supervise, and their organization. It is impossible for FLSs to escape cultural differences and cultural conflict in their roles as supervisors. Culture can be defined as a “framework that guides and bounds life practices” (Hanson, 2004, p. 4). People acquire early in life their own cultural references and therefore tend to be unaware that many of their daily interactions and decisions are made within that framework. This lack of awareness of one’s personal cultural practices becomes a problem when one experiences a difference with someone who does not share the same cultural practices. It is important for FLSs to also understand that there is wide variation of individual behavior within a given

culture (Lynch & Hanson, 2004). For example, although European American culture is time conscious and values promptness, there are people within this culture who are not timely, who do not wear watches and are not concerned with the strict keeping of time.

Cross-cultural competence is sometimes viewed as a learning continuum of attitudes and beliefs through which a person progresses. People typically go through a variety of stages as they learn about new cultures. Very few people embrace all cultural differences readily and with complete understanding. But through increased awareness and information about different cultures, people are often able to begin developing cultural competence and embracing diversity. Learning about another culture, integrating this information, and then displaying competence through demonstrated beliefs, actions, and communications are part of an ongoing process. It is important for FLSs to develop an understanding of their own cultural practices and to become aware of the cultural practices of others to avoid misunderstandings and build more comfortable and effective workplaces. Table 11.5 includes some specific skills and competencies regarding cultural competence and working with diverse groups of people.

Set the Organizational Context

In addition to understanding how to influence and work with people from various cultural backgrounds, FLSs also need to understand how their organization does or does not use culturally affirming and responsive services and support, both with supported individuals and with employees. Just as individuals fall along a spectrum of cultural competence, so do organizations. Culturally competent organizations value diversity at all levels of the organization and demonstrate this through policies and practices (e.g., training, hiring, promotions, physical environment). Culturally competent organizations also support and reflect a commitment to understanding, valuing, and utilizing the full potential of each employee and his or her diverse perspectives. An organization bias assessment such as the one that appears at the end of this chapter, may help FLSs determine how culturally competent their organization is.

Table 11.5. Competencies for FLSs regarding cultural competence and diversity

FLSs understand culture and its impact on communication, interactions, and the broader context of the work environment.
FLSs use communication, team building, and conflict resolution strategies in a way that acknowledges and respects diversity.
FLSs implement training strategies that facilitate successful entry of employees who are recent immigrants into the organization and encourage competency building of these employees.
FLSs identify recruitment strategies that promote a diverse workforce and tap unique recruitment sources and opportunities within the community.
FLSs identify and implement strategies to make the interviewing process more culturally competent.
FLSs model culturally competent behavior and serve as change agents for increased cultural competence in the organization.

Adapted from Sedlezky, L., Anderson, L.L., Hewitt, A., O'Neill, S., Sauer, J., Larson, S.A., & Sjoberg, T. (2001). *The power of diversity: Supporting the immigrant workforce* (Facilitator guide and learner guide, pp. A1–A2). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living.

Not only do supervisors need to be able to understand how culturally competent their organizations are, but they also need to learn effective strategies for getting an organization to become more culturally competent. FLSs can be instrumental in helping organizations move along the continuum of cultural competence. FLSs can help the whole organization become more culturally competent by observing and communicating how their organization's spoken and unspoken policies and procedures are understood and practiced by all DSPs; by listening to DSPs and gathering their suggestions for improving the organizational climate; and by sharing these ideas with other supervisors, managers, and administrators. A curriculum designed to assist organizations to do this is listed in the Resources section of this chapter.

In the Spotlight: REM-MN

Sherri A. Larson and Howard J. Miller

REM-MN is a for-profit, 35-year-old family-owned organization providing a wide variety of supports throughout Minnesota. REM-MN currently serves more than 30,000 individuals and employs 4,500 staff members. Training and supporting supervisors and managers has been on the front burner at REM-MN since the late 1990s.

REM-MN carries out its mission to create opportunities for people by adhering to its guiding beliefs and philosophy. Within these beliefs is the conviction that a well-trained, motivated, and engaged management and supervision team makes the difference between the provision of quality services and marginal services. In 1996, the organization began to introduce supervisors and managers to Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989). Administrators supported the notion that supervisors and managers had to learn effective leadership skills for the organization to provide quality supports to individuals it served. REM-MN adopted the language of this training and incorporated it into their daily work lives. The training became increasingly focused on leadership skills and less focused on management skills.

In 2000, REM-MN developed a 3-day advanced leadership training that was supported by many of the concepts introduced in the book *First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently* (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). This advanced training emphasized performance-based skills, such as judging work performance, hiring and retaining quality staff, understanding basic employment law, and upholding professional integrity.

Due to restructuring in the organization, a number of additional managers joined the staff in 2001. The training no longer met the needs of the organization as newer and inexperienced managers were overwhelmed by the job tasks and information provided in the training and did not gain the leadership skills that REM-MN had hoped that the training would provide. The advanced leadership training was funneled into a 1-day training session on the intangibles of management and supervision, such as vision and leadership, and a separate orientation program was developed for supervisors and managers.

For the separate supervisor and manager program, training material was placed on CD-ROMs, to be used on laptop computers provided by the organization. The orientation covers becoming an effective leader, developing effective employees, developing effective teams, producing effective outcomes, controlling costs, and maintaining quality at homes. New supervisors and managers complete this program in conjunction with a mentoring program designed to support the further development of skills.

Since the implementation of this new approach to the training and orientation of supervisors and managers, REM-MN has seen a reduction in employment termination lawsuits thanks to the increased competency of supervisors and managers in understanding and applying employment law. There has also been a reduction in overall staff turnover. By offering a balance of soft and hard skills throughout orientation and training, supervisors and managers develop more effective teams, work more effectively with staff, and create better services for consumers.

From Larson, S.A., & Miller, H. (2002). *Supervisors of direct support professionals*. Paper presented at the 2002 Reinventing Quality conference, Chicago.

OVERCOMING IMPLEMENTATION BARRIERS

As with any organizational change, developing a new or improved system to support FLSs requires effort. It is important to involve current managers and supervisors as well as other stakeholders in defining the ideal system for the organization. Probably the biggest challenge is to create the system and actually implement it. It is very easy to get wrapped up in day-to-day crises and to lose track of the importance of making needed system improvements. An examination of the organization's current FLS turnover rate and satisfaction survey results from FLSs can provide some of the motivation for making the difficult changes.

It is also important for organizations to continually focus on what their supervisors need and how to fulfill these needs through improved practices. Often once FLSs are trained and oriented, they are forgotten about until it is time for them to be promoted. Organizations need to find and provide ways to recognize and support all employees, including their FLSs.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. To what extent do supervisors in your organization have clear or unclear role expectations?
2. What competencies does your organization strive to develop in supervisors?
3. What strategies does your organization use to ensure that supervisors are not overburdened with direct support hours when they are unable to find DSPs to work these hours? How does your organization provide support and incentives for supervisors who are working additional hours?
4. How does your organization develop a cadre of effective new supervisors who are prepared to support, recruit, and retain DSPs? How does your organization develop leadership skills in DSPs who are preparing to become FLSs?
5. What opportunities exist within your organization for supervisors to mentor, network, and communicate with other supervisors within your organization? Outside of your organization?
6. Does your organization emphasize the importance of developing culturally competent supervisors?
7. What barriers exist within your organization regarding organizational cultural competence?

8. What other barriers to supporting and training effective supervisors exist within your organization?

CONCLUSION

Solving workforce challenges such as DSP turnover requires a careful examination of the processes used to develop, socialize, orient, train, and support supervisors. Many of the other chapters in this book outline techniques that work with both DSPs and FLSs. This chapter has detailed several additional processes that organizations can use to specifically support FLSs. When applied in a planful way with other techniques, the strategies in this chapter can help reduce supervisor turnover and improve working conditions for every member of the work team, which in turn can lead to improved supports and quality-of-life outcomes for the individuals served by the organization.

RESOURCES

Chapman, E.N. (1992). *The new supervisor: A guide for the newly promoted* (3rd ed.). Menlo Park, CA: Crisp Learning.

This short book introduces supervision to people who have just started or who are considering their first supervisory position. It includes two checklists to help individuals assess their attitudes about supervision roles. It also provides introductory information about the critical skills of discipline, delegation, coaching, and counseling. Designed to be read in 50 minutes, the book concludes with a 25-item true/false quiz that covers the content from the book.

College of Frontline Supervision (<http://rtc.umn.edu/cfs>)

The College of Frontline Supervision is an on-line training program designed to support FLSs in learning how to be most effective at what they do. New and experienced supervisors, managers, and human resources professionals in human services organizations can use this self-paced curriculum.

Haynes, M.E. (1991). *Stepping up to supervisor* (Rev ed.). Menlo Park, CA: Crisp Learning.

This book provides a bit more detail than *The New Supervisor* (Chapman, 1992) does about the process of becoming a new supervisor. Topics covered include being personally effective (e.g., communicating for understanding, managing your time, dealing with conflict), working with individuals (e.g., providing feedback, evaluating performance, handling discipline), and working with groups (e.g., using the talent in your group, conducting work-group meetings, building an effective team).

Hewitt, A., Larson, S.A., O'Neil, S., Sauer, J., & Sedlezky, L. (1998). *The Minnesota frontline supervisor competencies and performance indicators: A tool for agencies providing community services*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living. (Available from the publisher, 612-624-4512; <http://www.rtc.umn.edu/pdf/flsupcom.pdf>)

This booklet contains the results of a comprehensive job analysis for community FLSs. It describes the characteristics of a contemporary community support organization; describes the mission, vision, and values that underlie the competencies; and lists 14 broad FLS competency areas, competency statements within each area, and performance indicators for each of these statements.

O'Neill, S., Hewitt, A., Sauer, J., & Larson, S. (2001). *Removing the revolving door: Strategies to address recruitment and retention challenges* (Facilitator guide and learner guide). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living. (Available from the publisher, 612-624-4512; <http://rtc.umn.edu/wddsp/dol.html>)

This curriculum is designed to train FLSs to become active and effective in the recruitment, retention, and training of DSPs. The curriculum covers much of the same content as this book but also provides lesson plans and exercise suggestions for each topic. The modules addresses organizational practices that influence recruitment, retention, and training; the FLS's role in recruitment, retention, training, orientation, and mentoring; recognition and motivation of employees; and selecting and implementing intervention strategies.

Sedlezky, L., Anderson, L.L., Hewitt, A., O'Neill, S., Sauer, J., Larson, S.A., & Sjoberg, T. (2001). *The power of diversity: Supporting the immigrant workforce* (Facilitator guide and learner guide). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living. (Available from the publisher, 612-624-4512; <http://rtc.umn.edu/wddsp/dol.html>)

This curriculum assists FLSs in gaining cultural competency and other knowledge and skills necessary to manage and support a diverse workforce. The modules deal with such topics as understanding diversity; building a cohesive team; orienting and training workers who are recent immigrants; and using recruiting, hiring, and organizational practices that support these workers.

Job Description

Front-Line Supervisor Position, Community Human Services

MINIMAL QUALIFICATIONS

At least 1 year of experience in providing direct support to recipients of community human services. High school degree (or GED), valid driver's license, insurable.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

A 2-year degree or certificate in a human services field. Five years of direct support experience in community human services and some supervisory training and experience.

GENERAL POSITION DESCRIPTION

The front-line supervisor (FLS) is responsible for guiding and directing the work of direct support professionals (DSPs) who work in community settings serving people with disabilities and other human services needs. In addition, the FLS is responsible for ensuring that organizational policies and procedures are implemented correctly and that the individuals who receive community supports live valued and high-quality lives in their communities.

BROAD AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Participating in organizational activities, serving on committees, and communicating the organization's values and principles to others; assisting in recruiting, selecting, and supporting DSPs; providing training and mentoring to new and existing employees; guiding and directing the work of DSPs by setting clear expectations and monitoring progress; recognizing and valuing the skills and input of employees; and developing effective teams.

SPECIFIC JOB DUTIES

Area: Organizational Participation

The competent FLS knows and understands how recruitment and retention issues affect individuals receiving supports, the sites for which he or she is responsible, and the whole organization and effectively participates in organizationwide activities and communicates with others regarding these issues.

Skills and Duties

- _____ Knows the actual annual turnover and vacancy rate at the sites for which he or she has direct responsibility and how these compare with rates for the organization as a whole
- _____ Knows how to develop and implement a plan for reducing unwanted turnover and vacancies at the sites he or she supervises or across the organization as a whole
- _____ Supports other FLSs in understanding and learning about recruitment and retention strategies and why they are important
- _____ Monitors turnover, recruitment success, and employee satisfaction and uses the results to improve personnel practices
- _____ Identifies necessary resources for individuals served and DSPs and advocates for these resources with managers

Area: Recruitment and Selection

The competent FLS is knowledgeable about a range of effective recruitment and selection strategies and has the skills necessary to find and hire new employees who are appropriate for the job, who can meet the needs of the people they support, and who are likely to stay.

Skills and Duties

- _____ Recruits new DSPs by posting announcements about open positions both within the organization and externally in newspapers and on job boards; by encouraging existing staff to recruit potential new hires; and by networking with high schools, technical schools, job centers, welfare-to-work programs, and other sources of potential new hires
- _____ Recruits and mentors community volunteers and interns

(continued)

Skills and duties from O'Neil, S., Hewitt, A., Sauer, J., & Larson, S. (2001). *Removing the revolving door: Strategies to address recruitment and retention challenges* (pp. 9–14 of learner guide). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living; adapted by permission.

Note: **This is only a sample of FLS job duties**, as they vary across organizations and sites. *The Minnesota Frontline Supervisor Competencies and Performance Indicators* (Hewitt, Larson, O'Neil, Sauer, & Sedlezky, 1998) and other job analysis results can be used to develop a complete list.

- _____ Assists in the development of promotional materials for the organization, including newsletters, newspaper articles, brochures, and videos, and maintains contacts with media
- _____ Understands the importance and components of a realistic job preview (RJP) in the hiring process and uses RJP's effectively with potential new hires
- _____ Schedules and completes interviews with potential new DSPs in collaboration with existing DSPs and individuals supported and their family members
- _____ Understands, develops, and uses structured interviews and other methods for making decisions regarding an applicant's suitability to the job and organization
- _____ Can articulate the difference between recruitment and selection and the importance of both
- _____ Seeks input from other staff and from individuals receiving supports and family members in making hiring decisions

Area: Orientation, Training, and Mentoring

The competent FLS is knowledgeable about formal and informal training, orientation, and mentoring practices that respond to the needs, desires, and interests of new and existing employees.

Skills and Duties

- _____ Takes a direct interest in the roles and responsibilities of the DSPs he or she supervises
- _____ Coordinates, schedules, and documents DSPs' participation and performance in orientation, in-service training, and other self-directed learning and development
- _____ Observes and solicits feedback from staff and supported individuals and their families regarding DSP training needs and desired opportunities for the individuals
- _____ Provides orientation and answers questions from new DSPs through a variety of formal and informal instructional and learning activities
- _____ Identifies potential trainers and provides resources, coaching, and opportunities for DSP training
- _____ Provides mentorship opportunities to new and existing DSPs as needed or desired to promote retention
- _____ Understands the purpose of orientation and implements strategies to welcome new DSPs and help them feel comfortable in their new positions
- _____ Understands adult learning principles and uses them to effectively train DSPs
- _____ Teaches and coaches DSPs in the most effective approaches to achieving direct support competencies

Area: Job Analysis and Performance Appraisal

The competent FLS is knowledgeable about the process of developing accurate job descriptions for DSPs and using them in performance appraisals.

Skills and Duties

- _____ Is aware of the *Community Support Skill Standards* (Taylor, Bradley, & Warren, 1996) and how they can be used in development of job descriptions and performance reviews
- _____ Completes DSPs' performance reviews by gathering input from peers, individuals receiving supports and their family members, and organization personnel as required by policy and procedure
- _____ Develops and modifies job descriptions as needed
- _____ Understands the importance of accurate job descriptions and timely review processes
- _____ Provides necessary coaching; constructive feedback, including demonstrating correct performance for DSPs; and, as needed, disciplinary action

Area: Participatory Management and Supervisory Skills

The competent FLS is knowledgeable about his or her management responsibilities and a range of participatory management techniques and is skilled in using strategies that collaboratively involve DSPs in management decisions and promote DSP job growth, promotion, and responsibility.

Skills and Duties

- _____ Encourages or nominates DSPs to participate in organizationwide cross-functional teams, committees, or advisory boards
- _____ Seeks input from other staff and from individuals supported and their family members in making hiring decisions
- _____ Delegates tasks or duties to DSPs as needed (beyond those in their job descriptions) for special events and activities
- _____ Seeks DSPs' opinions and input regarding various issues (e.g., program plans, budgets, procedures) and empowers DSPs to make decisions
- _____ Attends and actively participates in organization management, planning, and cross-functional work groups

(continued)

Area: Recognition and Employee Motivation

The competent FLS understands the importance of recognition to job satisfaction and is able to match specific recognition techniques to the unique needs of individual DSPs.

Skills and Duties

- _____ Effectively communicates with DSPs by listening to their concerns, supporting and encouraging their ideas and work, thanking them for their contributions, and providing positive feedback regarding performance
- _____ Recognizes the need for and plans celebrations with DSPs
- _____ Treats DSPs as professionals and acknowledges their unique skills and contributions
- _____ Effectively uses organizationwide recognition plans, as well as personal ways of acknowledging others for work well done

Area: Team Building and Conflict Management

The competent FLS is proactive in developing and supporting work teams, identifies areas in which his or her work teams are having difficulty, and employs effective team building and conflict management strategies as needed.

Skills and Duties

- _____ Facilitates teamwork and positive interactions and attitudes among staff
- _____ Provides counseling and support to DSPs when conflicts arise
- _____ Provides formal communication to DSPs by using communication log books or memos and by facilitating effective meetings and purposeful interactions
- _____ Encourages staff to maintain appropriate boundaries regarding personal and professional issues
- _____ Coordinates and facilitates annual, quarterly, and as-needed planning meetings for individuals receiving supports or assists DSP in this process
- _____ Supports the coordination and facilitation of staff meetings
- _____ Understands that factors such as culture, age, gender, and other life experiences or perspectives may affect communication and helps team members resolve conflicts based on miscommunication due to those and other factors
- _____ Welcomes new employees and helps new and existing employees become a well-functioning team

Front-Line Supervisor Performance Assessment

Supervisor name: _____ Date completed: _____ Completed by: _____

Purpose of this tool: This assessment tool is designed to provide the front-line supervisor (FLS) with a clear understanding of his or her performance across a number of critical competence areas. As this FLS's designated supervisor, it is important for you to provide accurate, clear, and specific feedback to the FLS through this evaluation. **This is only a sample.** It includes only 2 of at least 14 needed competency areas; these areas are taken from *The Minnesota Frontline Supervisor Competencies and Performance Indicators* (see Hewitt, Larson, O'Neil, Sauer, & Sedlezky, 1998).

Instructions: Please rate the performance demonstrated by the FLS on each skill statement in each of the competency areas listed. Check the box to the right of the skill statement that most accurately reflects the supervisor's performance (*below expectations, meets expectations, above expectations, or substantially above expectations*, as defined below). If you have not had the opportunity to observe or evaluate a specific skill, check N/A. Then mark the actual performance indicator you used to assess the FLS's performance of the stated skill.

When you meet with the FLS, compare your assessment with the supervisor's self-assessment and discuss any areas in which there is significant difference. Together use the information gathered on each of the assessments to create a development plan for the FLS.

Performance level scale

Below expectations	The supervisor has little to no knowledge of this skill or strategies for implementing it. Improvement is needed.
Meets expectations	The supervisor has some knowledge of this skill and understands the importance of the skill but does not understand how to implement it.
Above expectations	The supervisor has good knowledge of this skill and is usually able to use the skill effectively one the job; however, he or she needs additional information and support in using this skill in new or unfamiliar situations.
Substantially above expectations	The supervisor has superior knowledge of this skill, always uses this skill well, and can deal with almost any related situation effectively.
N/A	There are no opportunities in this setting for the supervisor to practice or demonstrate competence in this skill.

(continued)

Skill statements and performance indicators	Below expectations	Meets expectations	Above expectations	Substantially above	N/A
<p>Competency Area: Participatory Management and Supervisory Skills</p>					
<p>The competent FLS is knowledgeable about his or her management responsibilities and a range of participatory management techniques and is skilled in using strategies that collaboratively involve DSPs in management decisions and promote DSP job growth, promotion, and responsibility.</p>					
<p><i>Encourages or nominates DSPs to participate in organizationwide cross-functional teams, committees, or advisory boards</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> DSPs supervised by this FLS are on cross-functional teams and committees within the organization (e.g., strategic planning, recruitment/retention). <input type="checkbox"/> The FLS provides a summary of activities throughout the organization in which DSPs whom he or she supervises were involved (e.g., planning company picnic, human rights committee). 					
<p><i>Seeks input from other staff and from individuals receiving supports and their family members in making hiring decisions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> DSPs and individuals receiving supports and their family members report that the FLS has consulted them before making a hiring decision. <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisors describe how they incorporate DSP, consumer, and family input into their hiring decision. 					
<p><i>Delegates tasks or duties to DSPs as needed (beyond those in their job descriptions) for special events and activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> DSPs report that the FLS delegates various tasks to them and provides follow-up to ensure that the tasks have been completed. <input type="checkbox"/> The FLS demonstrates for the manager his or her system for remembering what tasks have been assigned to various staff members and how he or she follows up to ensure completion. 					
<p><i>Seeks DSPs' opinions and input regarding various issues (e.g., program plans, budgets, procedures) and empowers DSPs to make decisions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The staff meeting agenda and minutes clearly indicate that the FLS has sought DSP opinion, input, and ideas. <input type="checkbox"/> DSPs report that the FLS has allowed them to make decisions. <input type="checkbox"/> DSPs report that they have had direct involvement in the development of procedures and individual support plans. 					

(continued)

	Below expectations	Meets expectations	Above expectations	Substantially above	N/A
<p>Skill statements and performance indicators</p> <p><i>Attends and actively participates in organization management, planning, and cross-functional work groups</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Manager observes the FLS participating in a cross-functional work group, planning meeting, or management meeting. <input type="checkbox"/> DSPs report that they are included in decision making regarding organization policy and procedures. <input type="checkbox"/> The FLS demonstrates active membership in management meetings, planning meetings, and cross-functional work groups by providing a summary of participation and issues important to the FLS that have evolved out of these meetings. 					
Competency Area: Recognition and Employee Motivation					
<p>The competent FLS understands the importance of recognition to job satisfaction and is able to match specific recognition techniques to the unique needs of individual DSPs.</p> <p><i>Effectively communicates with staff by listening to their concerns, supporting and encouraging their needs and work, thanking them for their contributions, and providing positive feedback regarding performance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> DSPs report that the FLS listens to concerns, is approachable regarding issues, and supports their ideas and concerns. <input type="checkbox"/> The manager observes the FLS supporting staff members who have brought issues to the FLS's attention. <input type="checkbox"/> The FLSs provides a copy of written documents such as surveys used to solicit feedback and information from DSPs. <p><i>Recognizes the need for and plans celebrations with DSPs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> DSPs report various celebrations that the FLS has arranged. <input type="checkbox"/> The FLS describes his or her ideas regarding staff celebrations and illustrates several inexpensive examples to the manager. <p><i>Treats DSPs as professionals and acknowledges their unique skills and contributions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> DSPs report that the FLS challenges DSPs by capitalizing on their strengths. <input type="checkbox"/> The FLS reports to the manager the various ways in which he or she has acknowledged specific contributions. <input type="checkbox"/> Staff meeting minutes reflect that the FLS acknowledged individual contributions. <p><i>Effectively uses organizationwide recognition plans, as well as personal ways of acknowledging others for work well done</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Organization expenditure reports indicate that the FLS used an incentive plan <input type="checkbox"/> DSPs indicate to the manager how they have utilized their incentives (e.g., saw a movie with tickets received, purchased items with a gift certificate, went home early to spend time with family). <input type="checkbox"/> The FLS often contributes organization newsletter articles regarding DSP accomplishments. 					

Front-Line Supervisor Self-Assessment

Your name: _____ Date completed: _____

Purpose of this tool: This assessment tool is designed to help you as a front-line supervisor (FLS) to identify your current level of skill in recruitment and retention of qualified direct support professionals (DSPs) and to serve as a basis for a self-development plan in these areas. You may also consider having others, such as some of the people you supervise or your supervisor, fill out copies of this form to give a more well-rounded review of your skills. By seeking others' input you will discover not only how well you apply the skill statements listed but also how important others feel these skill statements are to your role as an FLS.

Instructions: Please rate your performance on each skill statement in the tables on the following pages. Check the box to the right of the skill statement that most accurately reflects your performance (*introductory*, *practicing*, *proficient*, *advanced*, or *N/A*, as defined below). In the left-hand columns, please describe how important that skill is in your job duties, using the rating scale below. For example, if the skill is part of your job description and you use it frequently, check *high*; if a skill is not frequently required, check *low*.

Performance level scale

- Introductory I have little or no knowledge of this skill or strategies for implementing it.
- Practicing I have some knowledge of this skill. I understand the importance of the skill but do not have an understanding of how to implement it.
- Proficient I have good knowledge of this skill and am usually able to use this skill effectively on the job; however, I need additional information and support in using this skill in new or unfamiliar situations.
- Advanced I have superior knowledge of this skill, always use this skill well, and can deal with almost any related situation effectively.
- N/A There is no opportunity in this setting for me to practice or demonstrate competence in this skill.

Job priority level scale

- Low This skill is rarely required of me and is not necessary.
- Medium This skill is required of me but is not used daily and/or I could get by with not knowing or practicing the skill.
- High This skill is extremely necessary to my position. Either I use it almost daily, or it is critical that I have the skill when the job does require it.

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From O'Neil, S., Hewitt, A., Sauer, J., & Larson, S. (2001). *Removing the revolving door: Strategies to address recruitment and retention challenges* (pp. 9–14 of learner guide). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living; adapted by permission.

Note: Many of these skill statements come from *The Minnesota Frontline Supervisor Competencies and Performance Indicators* (Hewitt, Larson, O'Neil, Sauer, & Sedlezky, 1998). See the resources section of this chapter for more information on this publication.

Priority level	Performance level			
	High	Medium	Low	N/A
Skill statements				
Competency Area: Organizational Participation				
<i>The competent FLS knows and understands how recruitment and retention issues affect receiving supports, the sites for which he or she is responsible, and the whole organization and effectively participates in organizationwide activities and communicates with others regarding these issues.</i>				
		Knows the actual annual turnover and vacancy rate at the sites for which he or she has direct responsibility and how these compare with rates for the organization as a whole		
		Knows how to develop and implement a plan for reducing unwanted turnover and vacancies at the sites he or she supervises or across the organization as a whole		
		Supports other FLSs in understanding and learning about recruitment and retention strategies and why they are important		
		Monitors turnover, recruitment success, and employee satisfaction and uses the results to improve personnel practices		
		Identifies necessary resources for individuals served and DSP and advocates for these resources with managers		
Competency Area: Recruitment and Selection				
<i>The competent FLS is knowledgeable about a range of effective recruitment and selection strategies and has the skills necessary to find and hire new employees who are appropriate for the job, who can meet the needs of the people they support, and who are likely to stay.</i>				
		Recruits new DSPs by posting open positions both within the organization and externally in newspapers and on job boards; by encouraging existing staff to recruit potential new hires; and by networking with high schools, technical schools, job centers, welfare-to-work programs, and other sources of potential new hires		
		Recruits and mentors community volunteers and intern students		

(continued)

Priority level	Skill statements					Performance level				
	High	Medium	Low	Introductory	Practicing	Proficient	Advanced	N/A		
				Provides orientation and answers questions from new DSPs through a variety of formal and informal instructional and learning activities						
				Identifies potential trainers and provides resources, coaching, and opportunities for DSP training						
				Provides mentorship opportunities to new and existing DSPs as needed or desired to promote retention						
				Understands the purpose of orientation and implements strategies to welcome new DSPs and help them feel comfortable in their new positions						
				Understands adult learning principles and uses them to effectively train DSPs						
				Teaches and coaches DSPs in the most effective approaches to achieving direct support competencies						
Competency Area: Job Analysis and Performance Appraisal										
<i>The competent FLS is knowledgeable about the process of developing accurate job descriptions for DSPs and using them in performance appraisals.</i>										
				Is aware of the <i>Community Support Skill Standards</i> (Taylor, Bradley, & Warren, 1996) and how they can be used in development of job descriptions and performance reviews						
				Completes DSPs' performance reviews by gathering input from peers, individuals receiving supports and their family members, and organization personnel as required by policy and procedure						
				Develops and modifies job descriptions as needed						
				Understands the importance of accurate job descriptions and timely review processes						
				Provides necessary coaching; constructive feedback, including demonstrating correct performance for DSPs; and, as needed, disciplinary action						

(continued)

Priority level	Skill statements				Performance level				
	High	Medium	Low		Introductory	Practicing	Proficient	Advanced	N/A
Competency Area: Participatory Management and Supervisory Skills									
<i>The competent FLS is knowledgeable about his or her management responsibilities and a range of participatory management techniques and is skilled in using strategies that collaboratively involve DSPs in management decisions and promote DSP job growth, promotion, and responsibility.</i>									
				Encourages or nominates DSP to participate in organizationwide cross-functional teams, committees, or advisory boards					
				Seeks input from other staff and from individuals supported and their family members in making hiring decisions					
				Delegates tasks or duties to DSPs as needed (beyond those in their job descriptions) for special events and activities					
				Seeks DSPs' opinions and input regarding various issues (e.g., program plans, budgets, procedures) and empowers DSPs to make decisions					
				Attends and actively participates in organization management, planning, and cross-functional work groups					
Competency Area: Recognition and Employee Motivation									
<i>The competent FLS understands the importance of recognition to job satisfaction and is able to match specific recognition techniques to the unique needs of individual DSPs.</i>									
				Effectively communicates with DSPs by listening to their concerns, supporting and encouraging their ideas and work, thanking them for their contributions, and providing positive feedback regarding performance					
				Recognizes the need for and plans celebrations with DSPs					
				Treats DSP as professionals and acknowledges their unique skills and contributions					
				Effectively uses organizationwide recognition plans, as well as personal ways of acknowledging others for work well done					

(continued)

Front-Line Supervisor Self-Development Plan for Recruitment and Retention

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. List the two competency areas from your Front-Line Supervisor Self-Assessment which had the most skill statements listed as high priorities and low performance levels. These are your most critical and immediate needs.

a.

b.

2. Identify where these skills are taught (what training units or modules will be most helpful in learning about these skills).

3. Create goal statements (what you want to accomplish) regarding these critical need areas:

During training	In the next 3–6 months

4. List four specific steps that you can take to meet your goal statements:

During training	In the next 3–6 months

Organizational Bias Assessment

Does your organization . . .	Yes	No	Don't know
1. Welcome and accept all employees regardless of cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, or linguistic background?			
2. Ensure that all staff members are given equal opportunity to voice their concerns and comment about the workplace with no repercussions?			
3. Ensure that meetings are not dominated by one particular point of view?			
4. Respond to concerns and comments about the work environment in a respectful and timely manner?			
5. Openly disapprove of any ethnic, racial, religious, sexual, or other demeaning slur or joke in the workplace?			
6. Encourage and respect interaction between people of diverse backgrounds in meetings and/or in the everyday work environment?			
7. Allow variety in dress and grooming?			
8. Recognize and respect different religious and ethnic holidays in terms of release time for employees, program planning, and food for public and staff events?			
9. Demonstrate flexibility with and provide support to staff who have limited English language skills?			
10. Offer training on multicultural topics to all staff members?			
11. Seek to diversify its staff, administration, and board of directors, by actively recruiting people of diverse cultures, races, abilities, and gender?			
12. Have a written commitment to diversity in its mission statement, bylaws, and policies?			