



**Social Workers
Registration Board**
Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

**SUPERVISION EXPECTATIONS FOR
REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKERS**

POLICY STATEMENT

Approved:
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For Review:

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This policy statement is based on the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 (the Act)

1. Introduction and Background

The Social Workers Registration Act does not specify an expectation for supervision although Section 29 (1) & (2) outlines that the Board may adopt conditions for practising certificates that may include supervision. Supervision is a universally accepted practice standard in the social work profession and considered by the Board to be an essential element ensuring competent social work practice.

The purpose of this policy statement is to outline the expectations of the Board regarding Social Work Supervision in respect of the requirements determined by the Board for Competency and Practising Certificates.

2. Supervision as a Registration Requirement

The Board has identified the criteria an individual is expected to meet when renewing a Practising Certificate. Included in this is an expectation that a practitioner will access regular and appropriate supervision at least monthly and in a manner that is consistent with reasonable expectations of the levels of skill and practice ability of the individual.

Professional supervision is one of the essential means to develop workers and ensure quality service provision. Professional practice knowledge and skills are learned and gained through tertiary study and gaining social work qualifications. It is the direct practice, guidance and reflection provided by supervision that enhances professional development and supports competent, accountable and safe practice. Furthermore the Board considers that the interests of the public are best served by the profession requiring all registered social workers to be in a formal supervision relationship.

The Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, most social service agencies employing social workers, and educational providers arranging practice have clearly stated policies regarding supervision. It is not the intention or role of the Board to define “supervision” as it recognises the range of definitions that are approved by the profession, social service agencies and social work educators. The Board also recognizes the high level of consensus within the social work profession and amongst other key stakeholders of the purpose of supervision, the principles that guide it and the belief that it is fundamental to competent professional social work practice.

3. Principles of Supervision

The following principles are common to a number of NZ social work supervision policies and provide a framework, alongside agency supervision policy, to guide the supervision practices of registered social workers:

- The over-riding priority of professional supervision is to promote and protect the interests of the client.
- Professional supervision promotes safe and accountable practice.
- Professional supervision promotes inclusive practice underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi, responsiveness to Māori, and sound ethical principles.
- Professional supervision promotes active recognition of the cultural systems that shape the workers practice.
- Professional supervision encompasses a respectful, strengths-based approach which affirms people’s dignity, capacity, rights, uniqueness and commonalities.

- Professional supervision provides a forum to ensure accountability to the agency, to clients and the profession.
- Professional supervision is available for all practicing social workers.
- Professional supervision is regular and uninterrupted and based on a negotiated contract.
- Professional supervision is located within a learning environment where professional development is valued and encouraged.
- Professional supervision will be consistent with the requirements associated with level of experience.

4. SWRB expectations of Registered Social Workers in respect of Supervision

Registered Social Workers will:

- access regular professional social work supervision;
- access specialist supervision appropriate and consistent with their practice;
- access supervision that is cognisant of cultural worldview, experience, skills and requirements for accountability;
- access supervision that is consistent with their “spiritual, traditional and theoretical understandings that are congruent with their worldview”;¹
- provide evidence of supervision;
- comply with mechanisms of agency accountability and where professional supervision that is appropriate to the experience or expertise of a practitioner is not available within an agency setting seek either peer or external opportunities for supervision; and
- be able to provide attestation and a contract for supervision at the time of undertaking competency requirements or Annual Practising Certificate renewal.

5. SWRB expectations of supervision for newly graduated social workers and social workers with overseas qualifications.

The SWRB policy on Enough Practical Experience requires a social worker who has graduated with a recognised New Zealand social work qualification to have 2000 hours supervised social work practice, post qualification in New Zealand to be eligible for full registration, and a social worker who has graduated with an overseas qualification to also have 2000 hours of supervised social work practice in New Zealand to be eligible for full registration.

Social workers graduating with a recognised social work qualification and moving into practice have a wide range of previous experience. Graduates may be in an early stage in their professional social work career, or may already have considerable practice experience and bring to their practice a kete of knowledge and skills. The SWRB’s expectation for all new graduates, regardless of their previous experience, is

¹ Beddoe, L. and R. Egan (2009). Social Work Supervision. Social Work. Contexts and practice. Second Edition. M. Connolly and L. Harms. Melbourne, Oxford University Press: 410-422

that they have 2000 hours supervised practice before being eligible for full registration.

A period of supervised social work practice following qualification complements the knowledge, skills and practical experience gained during the programme of study. It provides an opportunity for graduates to reflect on the link between theory and practice, ensures their ongoing learning is grounded and relevant and their professional development focussed and continues to challenge their thinking and practice.

Overseas qualified social workers may also bring with them considerable knowledge and experience. However, respectful and culturally appropriate social work practice requires an awareness and understanding of the New Zealand context, both historical and current, as well as the skills to enable workers to interact biculturally with Māori and engage competently with a range of different ethnic and cultural groups. A period of supervised social work practice in New Zealand for overseas qualified social workers is considered essential to ensure that they have a forum to reflect on immediate as well as past practice.

6. Criteria for Supervisors

The Board prefers that persons providing social work supervision will be registered social workers who have completed training in professional supervision and who practise in accord with accepted professional standards of experience and qualifications.

The Board also recognises that some senior and experienced or specialist practitioners may not have a supervisory relationship with another social work practitioner and in such cases the Board requirement is that the supervisor is able to evidence they provide supervision consistent with the Code of Conduct of the Board and also the generally accepted standards reflected in the Profession's Code of Ethics.

The Board expects that all supervisors of registered social workers are cognizant of the Board's supervision policy and principles of supervision. Further, all supervisors must be able to provide supervision that is relevant to the supervisee's spiritual, traditional and theoretical understandings, cultural worldview, experience, skills and requirements for accountability.