



**Social Workers
Registration Board**
Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

SUPERVISION EXPECTATIONS FOR REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKERS

POLICY STATEMENT

September 2024. Policy updated to reflect 2019 amendments to the Social Workers Registration Act, SWRB's Plain Language guidelines, and the SWRB Policy style guidelines

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Social Workers Registration Act 2003

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to outline the supervision expectations of social workers by the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB).

SCOPE

This Policy Statement applies to all social workers practising in Aotearoa New Zealand.

CONTEXT

The SWRB recognises the role of the profession in defining supervision for social workers. There is a 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. Professional supervision is one of the essential means of developing the practice of social workers and ensuring quality service provision.

Professional practice knowledge and skills are gained through tertiary study towards social work qualifications. Direct social work practice, and the guidance and reflection provided by professional supervision enhance professional development and support social workers to be competent, accountable and safe practitioners.

The SWRB considers that the interests of the public are best served by the profession requiring all registered social workers to be in a formal professional supervision relationship.

The SWRB's requirement for social workers to participate in professional supervision is articulated in the General Scope of Social Work Practice, and Core Competence Standard 10. Social workers are required to declare that they undertake professional supervision at the time of renewal of their practising certificate.

PRINCIPLES OF SUPERVISION

The following principles have been drawn from a selection of Aotearoa NZ social work supervision policies and sit alongside social workers' organisational supervision policies to guide the supervision practice of 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 social worker's 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 clients, the social worker's employer and the social work profession.
- Professional supervision is available for all practising 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 appropriate to the supervisee's level of experience.

POLICY STATEMENT

All practising social workers

The SWRB requires all practising social workers to access regular and relevant supervision at least monthly and in a manner that is consistent with the level of skill and practice experience of the individual social worker.

Practising Social Workers will:

- access regular professional social work supervision
- access specialist supervision appropriate to their practice
- access supervision that is understanding of their cultural worldview, experience, skills and requirements for accountability
- access supervision that is consistent with the "spiritual, traditional and theoretical understandings that are congruent with their worldview"¹
- provide evidence of their participation in professional supervision
- comply with employment accountability mechanisms
- 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
- be able to provide a contract for supervision, and confirmation of supervision received, at the time of undertaking competency requirements or Practising Certificate renewal.

Newly qualified social workers

The supervision of newly qualified social workers focuses on building on the knowledge, skills and practical experience gained during their social work study. Professional supervision should:

- provide an opportunity for graduates to reflect on the link between theory and practice
- ensure their ongoing learning is relevant, and professional development continues to challenge their thinking and practice.

Newly qualified social workers are provisionally registered for the first 2000 hours of practice to support this development, and they must evidence their engagement in professional supervision to move to full registration.

Overseas qualified social workers new to practice in Aotearoa

Overseas qualified social workers new to practice in Aotearoa New Zealand often bring considerable social work knowledge and experience. Culturally safe social work practice in Aotearoa New Zealand requires an awareness and understanding of the historical and current social context within which social work is practised, and the skills to practise within a bicultural framework with Māori. Social workers must also be able to practise safely with people of a range of ethnicities and cultures living in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Professional supervision should support learning about the Aotearoa New Zealand context for social workers new to practice in this country. Overseas qualified social workers new to practice in Aotearoa are provisionally registered for the first 2000 hours of practice to support this learning and development and must evidence their engagement in professional supervision to move to full registration.

Supervisors

The SWRB prefers that professional social work supervision is provided by registered social workers who hold a current practising certificate, are experienced practitioners, and have completed training in social work supervision.

The SWRB recognises that some senior or specialist practitioners may engage in professional supervision by a supervisor from another discipline. In such cases, the SWRB requires that the supervisor understands the regulatory requirements, and professional responsibilities of social workers. These are reflected in the SWRB Code of Conduct and Core Competence Standards, along with the Profession's ANZASW Code of Ethics.

The SWRB expects that all supervisors of registered social workers will be familiar with this Supervision Policy and provide professional supervision consistent with the purpose, principles and requirements contained within it.

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