

Administrative Supervision

Administration is a process that implements organisational objectives. Front-line supervisors have clearly defined administrative-managerial functions.

Tasks

1. Staff recruitment and selection
2. Inducting and placing workers
3. Work planning
4. Work assignment
5. Work delegation
6. Monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating work
7. Coordinating work
8. The communication function
9. The supervisor as advocate
10. The supervisor as administrative buffer
11. The supervisor as change agent
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1. Staff recruitment and selection

- Select candidates likely to ‘fit in’
- Selecting applicants who have the personal characteristics, attitudes, and maturity that will allow them to feel comfortable and accepting in implementing agency objectives
- Participate in establishing criteria for hiring staff and in implementing these criteria in interviewing job applicants

2. Inducting and placing workers

- Need to consciously and consistently work at assisting the beginning worker to feel accepted as a valued member of the work environment
- Induction involves locating the new worker physically, socially, and organisationally in the agency
- Job specifics:
 - Salary, pay periods
 - Work hours, overtime
 - Health insurance, pension
 - Leave
 - Travel
 - Meetings and workshop attendance
 - IT policy
 - Information around parking, facilities
 - Nameplate, cards
 - Mail

- For new staff knowledge of office operations allow for a feeling of confidence, competence, and comfort and a sense of being one of the group
- Offer help in finding housing, day-care, doctor, dentist
- Have a more experienced employee act as a sponsor

3. Work planning

- Administration sets general policies and objectives that are broken down into duties and tasks
- Each supervisor is allocated 5-7 staff
- Supervisor has to organise the staff, divide and assign work, allocate staff and resources in a way that contributes to achieving the mission of the agency
- Planning involves scheduling and prioritising work
- Long-range planning involves preparation of a unit budget, based on an assessment of the future workload and the fiscal, technical, and human resources likely to be required

4. Work assignment

- Supervisor needs to know individual worker's capacities
- Should equalise the demands made on workers at the same title and salary level
- Consider the caseload carried by each worker – number, difficulty and challenge
- Workers need stimulation of challenge in order to maintain motivation and increase professional growth
- Consider matching client and worker in terms of age, gender, race, or ethnicity
- Ensure deadlines can be met
- Challenge to document every action – compliance focus

Work assignment procedures

- Assign cases based on knowledge of case characteristics, worker experience and ability
- Allocation by staff at a group meeting – stimulation by discussion, better overview of the total referral caseload

Problems in work assignment

- Each worker has limits to tolerance – some cases should not be assigned due to worker feelings
- Supervisors desire to allocate cases to the most competent and experienced staff must be balanced with the need for equitable work distribution and between the desire to give each client the best worker and the need for new, inexperienced workers to learn the job
- Gatekeeping function regarding acceptance of work that might be best suited to another unit
- Supervisor must decide how much discretion to allow

5. Work delegation

- Task delegation indicates how work is to be accomplished

- Levels of autonomy require different levels of direction from the supervisor
- Intrinsic job satisfaction, heightened motivation, and increased productivity tend to be associated with greater levels of autonomy
- Even maximum autonomy is exercised within constraints that derive from the objectives of the agency, the requirements of agency survival, and the tenets of the profession
- Task delegation is a function of interacting variables: supervisor attributes; supervisee attributes; nature of the task delegated; and organisational climate
- Situational variables:
 - o high visibility, public sensitivity, power of interest groups
 - o Client vulnerability affects level of delegation
 - o Commitment of scarce resources
 - o Pressure for accountability

6. Monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating work

- Involves verbal reports from staff, reading records, and reviewing statistical reports
- Important to ensure that no harm is done
- Monitoring the worker and the work
- Supervisor must be concerned with:
 - o Staff tardiness
 - o Absences
 - o Requests for leave
 - o Sickness
 - o Emergency coverage
- Supervisors should enforce agency policy in a reasonable, fair and equitable manner – clear and explicit communication
- Evaluation - standards – must make a judgement regarding a minimally acceptable level
- Monitoring, review and evaluation are the **inspectional** aspects of administrative supervision – these are not inherently undesirable procedures – they are necessary to ensure that the client receives satisfactory service

7. Coordinating work

- Supervisor integrates work of unit with that of others in the agency and with external agencies
- Vertical and horizontal relationships
- Activates support staff resources – thorough coordination the supervisor makes available the human, fiscal, and physical resources required to do the job
- Coordination requires that the supervisor adjudicates conflicts between staff in different units
- Supervisors need the authority to require that facilities are made available.

- Warning regarding clash between strong administration manager and weak supervisor

8. The communication function

- Supervisor's position is one of the administrative control centers for gathering, processing, and disseminating information coming from above and below in the chain of command
- Formal channels of communication need to be provided and the nature of the work to be done must be precisely stated and clearly defined

Process in organisational communication

- Traditional one primary upward channel of communication – from worker through supervisor to manager
- If communication between supervisor and supervisee is to be effective, it needs to be relevant, distortion free, sufficiently detailed and prompt
- Must see that the message is understood and accepted and the worker must be motivated to act in accordance with the information transmitted
- Communication channels: personal, face-to-face communication; telephone; email; memorandums; Skype

Problems in organisational communication

- Supervisor may be reluctant to communicate negative information – fear of incurring hostility or displeasure
- Staff may also be reluctant fearing rejection, a negative evaluation, or a censuring reaction
- Barriers to communication due to conflicting group loyalties, need for self-protection
- Credibility is important for effective communication – staff need to have an attitude of confidence and trust in the motives and sincerity of the supervisor.
- Lateral communication between units – are not hierarchical.

9. The supervisor as advocate

- Staff look to the supervisor to represent their interests and actively press for implementation of necessary changes.
- Effective administrative supervision requires active representation of staff interests with higher level management
- Supervisors advocacy with management more effective if the problem is outlined clearly and alternative solutions are proposed.

10. The supervisor as administrative buffer

- Supervisor performs the function of dealing with complaints – protect staff from having to deal with client's strong feelings

- Supervisor as a buffer between staff and the agency – e.g. unrealistic workloads
- Responsible for staff safety from sexual harassment
- Protect the agency from contravention or subversion of agency regulations and ideological opposition to the presuppositions on which the rules were formulated
- Agency self-preservation is a legitimate objective – workers should have a sincere belief in the agency's mission
- Supervisor acts as guardian of the agency's belief system
- But should not allow agency policy, procedure, regulations, or administrative orders to interfere with their ethical practice of social work

11. The supervisor as change agent

- Supervisors should be open to suggestions for useful innovation
- Can actively influence management to make changes and influence workers to accept them
- In general the manager prefers a passive conforming supervisor
- Staff want an aggressive, advocacy oriented supervisor
- When staff consider agency requirement for conformity to be oppressive they are encouraged to seek redress and change within the agency
- Progressive, innovative managers often have difficulty getting staff to accept changes in policies and procedures – this requires additional energy
- Change is best achieved if:
 - o Staff participate in planning the change
 - o They are informed early on of the nature of the planned change
 - o The change is introduced slowly – pilot
 - o Expectations are made clear and understandable
 - o Change is in line with perceived agency norms and objectives
 - o There is some assurance that the change will have the predicted effect
 - o Management (including supervisors) communicate strong belief in the desirability of the change
 - o There is appreciation of and empathy with the difficulties that change generates for staff
 - o Provision is made to reduce the costs of change to the staff.

