

Ten Things I Wish I Had Known About . . .

Supervision

- 1. SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENTS** Before starting with a new supervisor, take the time to read carefully the Supervisor Responsibility Statement. There are some important things you should know about this form—the first being that it **MUST** be signed before you start **ANY** work or those hours won't count. I know numerous trainee/interns who had to ask a supervisor to backdate a new form and then got into trouble because the form was revised by the BBS (indicated by tiny print on bottom) **AFTER** the date of the signature. Both the intern and supervisor can get fined for backdating.
- 2. YOU HAVE MORE RIGHTS THAN YOU KNOW.** Some interns feel intimidated by their supervisors and worry that the supervisors won't sign the forms if the intern speaks up or questions them. Know that they **CANNOT** do that. The BBS responsibility statement supervisors sign states they agree to give you 1 week's **WRITTEN** notice of their intent not to sign future hours and they must sign for past hours.
- 3. SUPERVISORS ARE SUPPOSED TO KNOW LAWS AND REGULATIONS.** The BBS has made numerous changes to collection of hours since 2010, including the ability of trainees to count note-taking, the addition of CCA and subsequent cap on its hours, and the amount of supervision required by interns, to name a few. Supervisors must keep up with these changes, but I have known many who not only don't but also then refuse to sign hours based on the new laws. It is in your best interest to routinely check the BBS website and CAMFT and call changes to the attention of your supervisor, especially for any of your supervisors who are not keeping up themselves.
- 4. GROUP SUPERVISION IS NOT GROUP THERAPY.** I was once called out by a supervisor for being the only person in my group who hadn't cried yet. I was also 10 years senior to the next oldest person in the group and recognized the group was a professional place for me to process cases—not my own personal problems. If you feel unsafe in group supervision, you are not alone. Some supervisors cross the line into therapy and lose sight of the purpose of the group. Hold tight and stick to your cases.
- 5. GET YOUR FORMS SIGNED WEEKLY.** Some supervisors will try to dictate to you when they will sign your forms (e.g., monthly, at the end of a semester, quarterly). This is not in your best interest. For interns in a volunteer role, the

- supervisor's signature is your pay. Supervisors cannot refuse to pay you, as per the BBS statement they sign. Also, if heaven forbid a supervisor should be hit by a bus, you are screwed. Politely insist that your supervisors sign your forms during supervision for the week prior (and throw in "as recommended by the BBS" if they won't comply).
6. **ASK FOR MORE.** It is hard to know what is supposed to happen in good supervision if you are a trainee. Some less than good supervisors will take your lead and only talk about your problem cases. Others will cut the hour short if you seem to have everything under control. Good supervision will collaborate on case conceptualization, diagnoses, treatment planning, and termination issues for even the cases you have "under control." Ask to go over the above if your supervisor is not bringing it up; it will help you when it is time to take the exams.
 7. **EMERGENCY SITUATIONS** Your teenage client just handed you his supply of ecstasy at school or your adult client tells you she will commit suicide upon leaving your office—and your supervisor isn't answering her phone. Before these things happen to you (as they happened to me!), discuss emergency planning with your supervisor so you don't go into panic mode.
 8. **LOOK UP SUPERVISORS' LICENSES ONLINE.** Believe it or not, I have had 2 supervisors whose licenses expired or were suspended. Luckily, I checked online beforehand and they were able to rectify their license before I began working, so my hours counted. Had I not discovered that important info, my hours would not have counted (and they would have been practicing therapy without a license, which is a violation of the law). You can easily check by going to bbs.ca.gov and clicking "online license verification."
 9. **VACATION IS NO EXCUSE FOR NO SUPERVISION.** If your supervisor wants to take a week off from supervising, it does not mean no one is responsible for signing your hours. Your supervisor should arrange for a substitute or arrange to supervise you via Skype, which is allowed in agency and school settings. Best to ask up front what the supervisor's arrangement will be in case he decides to take a week off, so your hours are not put in jeopardy.
 10. **FILE A COMPLAINT** When supervision is really bad, file a complaint. You are not doing your fellow interns/trainees (or our profession!) any favors by allowing bad supervision to go on. File a complaint using the Consumer Complaint Form under the "Forms/Publications" section of the BBS website. You can submit it anonymously if you are afraid of repercussions. Encourage fellow interns to do the same. The more complaints the BBS gets against the same supervisor, the more likely action will be taken.