



**Queensland Counsellors Association Inc**  
*Member Association of PACFA*

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**Peer Group Supervision Guidelines**

In peer group supervision 'members take shared responsibility for supervising and being supervised...

There will be no permanent supervisor who holds overall responsibility for the work of the group or for its well being. Formal leadership may be rotating, according to an initial agreement or it may be organic – moving from person to person... The initial agreement is that all participate equally in the role and responsibilities of both supervisee and supervisor. (Proctor B, 2000, *Group Supervision*, Sage: London, p.38).

*The following guidelines developed in 2009 are based on QCA peer group supervision practice since 1997:*

**Forming a Peer Supervision Group**

- Queensland Counsellors Association (QCA) members who wish to become part of a peer supervision group can express interest initially by contacting the QCA Secretary [qca@qca.asn.au](mailto:qca@qca.asn.au) to find if there is a vacancy in an existing group or if there are others on a waiting list to form a group.
- To seek interest from other members, the forming group might check other QCA website listed members to see who lives within a suitable distance and email to make contact.
- A request to the QCA Contact Newsletter editor to place an advert in the Newsletter is another possibility.
- It is not necessary that all group participants are members of QCA.

**Group size and venue**

- Group size is recommended at 4-6. This allows for each person to present at least every 2<sup>nd</sup> session.
- A normal time for a group meeting is two hours when usually there is time for at least two cases or topics for discussion.
- Group composition ideally includes at least two people who are trained in supervision and are experienced supervisors.
- A central venue that offers privacy is preferred e.g. a library that has a withdrawal room, a practice clinic, a quiet café or private home are all possible venues.

**Group process**

- At an initial meeting the group is advised to discuss what each person wants from supervision and how it will be conducted. The Sample Supervision Contract and Thinking Through Group Supervision can provide a framework for this discussion.
- It is useful to select a chairperson for each session. That person is responsible for conducting the session and keeping time to ensure the agenda is met. The chair can be rotated around group members.
- The document Preparation for Group Supervision may assist individual members in preparing for presenting a case in supervision.
- The agenda for the session can be ascertained by an initial check-in during which group members share what is happening in their counselling /supervision practice and any personal issues impacting on their work. Participants can indicate if they have a case to discuss or another topic they wish to raise, e.g. how records are kept, ethical dilemmas in counselling practice, professional development attended.

- Various group supervision models may be used for the case discussion e.g. reflecting team.
- When each person takes responsibility for staying on task the time can be profitably utilised.
- A qualified and experienced professional colleague may be invited to the group as an external observer on occasions to offer collegial support on process and operation of the group.
- Some groups may wish to share tea or coffee during the meeting. This can work well when the food & beverages do not take precedence over the business of the supervision process.

### Summary of process

The structure of the group supervision may vary, however the following may be useful:

- An individual check-in where agenda items are flagged
- Time allocation to two agenda items (or more if time permits)
- Closure that confirms date, place and chairperson for next session and time for signing a supervision log.

It is advisable that group members keep personal records of the supervision session for their own learning and professional development.

### Long Distance Peer Group Supervision

When group members live in regional, rural or isolated areas group supervision may be conducted via Skype. Skype is an internet program that can be downloaded free.

<http://www.skype.com/intl/en/> By entering a conference call, group members can speak with one another at no cost.

Before commencing Skype sessions, it is advisable that participants share information via email or Skype using a web-cam (*Camera that is incorporated in your computer or that can be purchased from a computer store*).

When one group member is unable to physically attend s/he could participate in sessions using Skype and a web-cam with the web-cam focussed on group members. This way a visual image of all members is possible. A downside to the process is that some body language and cues may be missed by the person at a distance.

Telephone communication in a peer group process when one person is distant heightens the potential misinterpretation of group members' comments and visual cues.

### Managing group dynamics

- Supervision ideally provides a safe space for individuals to debrief on and discuss issues that arise in their professional practice so it is essential that group members care for and provide ongoing support for one another.
- Keeping a disciplined approach on the supervision process and the model if a specific process is being used (e.g. reflecting team) helps the group stay on task.
- It is important that group members deal constructively with any issues that emerge in the group.
- If disagreements or conflicts arise these are best dealt within the group when possible.
- When group resolution is not possible, a member of the group may be asked to approach the aggrieved person to see if an acceptable outcome can be reached. Another option may be to invite an external mediator to provide a process for resolution, if agreed upon by the group.
- If a breach of ethics or code of conduct is considered to have taken place, an ethical complaint should be made to Queensland Counsellors Association using the Complaint Procedure in the Code of Ethics.

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**Peer Group Supervision Log for period ..... (e.g. 1.7.09 – 30.6.10)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b> <i>(each participant to initial)</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	

Verified by ..... *please print (1 group member)*

Signed ..... Date .....

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**Preparing for group supervision**

*Issues or areas for focus in peer group supervision*

1. The client/s
2. Interventions being used
3. The relationship (supervisee and client)
4. Supervisee reactions
5. Relationship of supervisee with supervisors (parallel process)
6. The supervisors (reactions, intuitions)
7. Various systems involved (organisations, families, teams, environment)

Other topics for group discussion and sharing e.g.

- *how records are maintained*
- *ethical dilemmas*
- *sharing learning from professional development activities*

Adapted from Michael Carroll - *Centre for Supervision Training* <http://www.supervisioncentre.com/>

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**Sample Peer Group Supervision Contract**

This is a supervision contract between the following group members from .....(date of commencement) until its mutual ending.

Name	Qualifications	Email	Mobile

We are all members of Professional Associations, abide by the Code of Ethics and Practice of the Associations and have Professional Indemnity Insurance for our work.

**Professional Memberships e.g.**

Name individuals	QCA - Queensland Counsellors Association
Name individuals	PACFA Reg - Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia
Name individuals	Other (specify)....

**What is supervision?**

We are agreed that supervision is a forum used by supervisees to reflect on all aspects of their clinical work, where they receive formal and informal feedback on that work and where the welfare of clients and the quality of the service they receive is central.

**Practicalities**

We will meet for two hours monthly or as arranged, at .....(venue) or other designated place, at a time to be arranged at the end of each supervisory session or over a period of months. We will usually meet on the ....(e.g. second Saturday of the month).

We have agreed that each of us will ensure that there are no unnecessary interruptions (mobiles, phone, people).

**Procedures**

1. We have agreed that the following arrangements will take place in the following situations:
2. One person will notify others of the meeting during the week before the meeting.
3. If a person is unable to attend they will notify another member of the group.
4. If disagreements or conflicts arise these will be dealt with within the group when possible.

5. When group resolution is not possible, a member of the group may be asked to approach the aggrieved person to see if an acceptable outcome can be reached. Another option may be to invite an external mediator to provide a process for resolution, if agreed upon by the group.
6. If a breach of ethics or code of conduct is considered to have taken place, an ethical complaint should be made to Queensland Counsellors Association using the Complaint Procedure in the Code of Ethics.
7. If there is need for extra supervision we will contact another member of the group or individual supervisor or colleague.
8. Each of us will keep our own record of supervision sessions.

### **Guidelines**

The following guidelines/ground rules will guide our time together:

1. Confidentiality - that unless duty of care is warranted, what is shared in supervision remains confidential.
2. Openness/honesty about work done and the supervisory relationship.
3. Gossip (any leakage of information in the systems) will not be engaged in and if it occurs will only be addressed if it interferes with the supervisory relationship.
4. Feedback for learning and reflection.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

We agree to rotate the position of chair each meeting. The chairperson will take responsibility for:

- Time keeping
- Managing the overall agenda of the session.

All group members will be responsible for

- Preparing for supervision
- Presenting in supervision at least every two or three sessions
- Identifying their own learning objectives
- Creating a safe place
- Monitoring the supervisory relationship
- Monitoring ethical issues of counselling and supervision
- Giving feedback to self and others in the group
- Applying learning from supervision
- Keeping notes of sessions.

### **Evaluation and Review**

We have agreed that informal evaluation of our Supervision will take place every sixth session. An annual review will take place at the end of each year or as requested by any group member.

### **Re-negotiation of Contract**

At any time any group member can initiate discussion around re-negotiation of the contract or any part of it.

We agree, to the best of our ability, to uphold the guidelines specified in this supervision contract and to manage the supervision relationship and process according to the ethical principles of PACFA (Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia).

**Signed**

**Date**

*(all group members to sign)*

### **Thinking Through Peer Group Supervision**

*Some questions for reflection during an initial meeting to determine wants and needs of group members and develop some rapport and awareness about each other.*

1. What do I want from peer group supervision?
2. What learning objectives would I bring to peer group supervision?
3. What do I want from peer group members?
4. What worries me about peer group supervision?
5. What interests me about peer group supervision?

Adapted from Michael Carroll - *Centre for Supervision Training* <http://www.supervisioncentre.com/>