



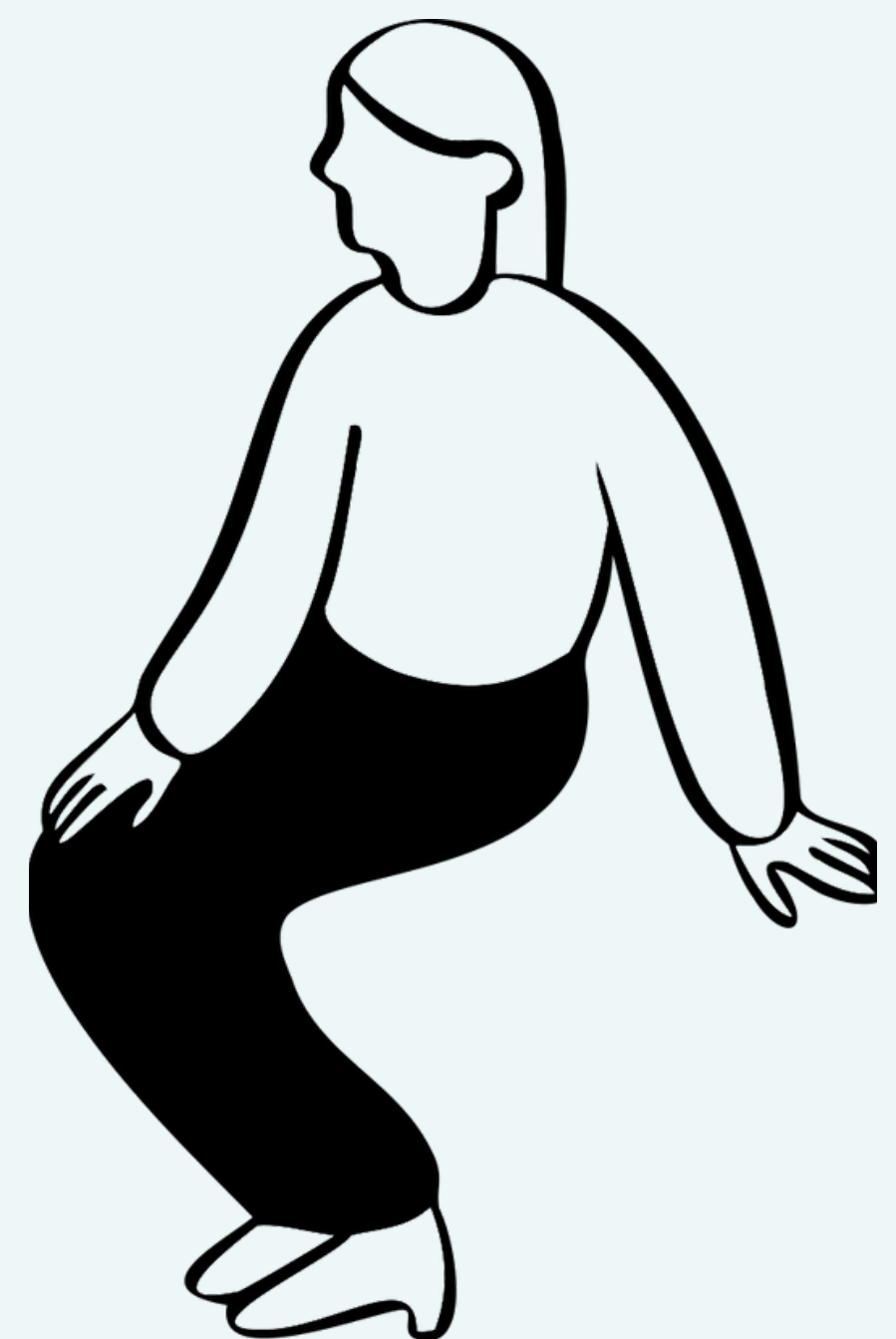
**Social Workers
Registration Board**
South Australia



Government
of South Australia



Supervision: An Explainer.



Supervision

Social work supervision is a structured process where a more experienced social worker (often a supervisor or manager) supports, guides, and oversees the work of another social worker or team. It's a critical component of professional practice in social work, ensuring ethical, effective, and reflective service delivery.

Professional regulatory bodies set specific expectations for supervision. For example:

- Frequency: The amount of supervision that social workers should receive in periods of time.
- Supervision Records: Documentation of supervision sessions, including what was discussed, action points, and any decisions made.
- These specific expectations are important for accountability and professional development.

What does the SWRB SA mean by social work supervision?

The SWRB SA considers that formal professional supervision aids public safety.

The SWRB SA's requirement for social workers to participate in professional supervision is articulated in the **Social Work Core Competencies Competency Area 7. Professional Development: Is committed to personal and professional development and engages in regular supervision.**

It is common for social worker regulatory bodies to emphasise the importance of supervision for professional growth, ethical practice, and accountability in various social work settings.

Key Features of Supervision:

- **Professional Accountability:** Supervision ensures that social workers are accountable for their practice, in line with the SWRB SA 7 Core Competencies and Code of Conduct. Supervisors provide oversight and support to ensure that practice remains ethical, effective, and in line with statutory requirements. SWRB SA regulates social workers in South Australia and supervisors play a role in ensuring that social workers comply with the Conduct and Competency standards.
- **Ethical and Reflective Practice:** Supervision encourages social workers to navigate ethical dilemmas, manage personal biases, and reflect on their work to continuously improve practice.
- **Support for Well-being:** Social work can be emotionally demanding. Supervision offers a space to discuss the emotional toll of the work, providing emotional support to prevent burnout and ensure the worker's well-being.

Types of Social Work Supervision:

There are different recognised types of supervision, at times they have different headings depending on where they are being discussed. They broadly fall under the following three groupings.

1. Reflective Supervision

Reflective supervision is common in social work and involves discussions that promote self-reflection and critical thinking. This is recognised in the Scope of Practice. It focusses on supporting social workers to understand their responses to their work, build self-awareness, and improve decision-making.

- **Focus on reflective practice:** This includes discussing personal feelings, assumptions, and biases to identify how these impact the social worker's practice. Social workers will often use reflective practice models to support the reflection, eg Kolb's Learning Cycle.
- **Personal development:** It encourages social workers to consider how their own experiences influence their approach to clients.
- **Ethical considerations:** This includes looking at the ethical dilemmas faced in practice, promoting reflective discussions about best practices in complex situations.

2. Clinical Supervision

Clinical supervision is a term often used when referring to a practitioner's casework and therapeutic approaches. It helps social workers improve their technical skills and provides a safe space to discuss cases and intervention strategies.

- Casework review: Supervisors and supervisees discuss specific cases to improve assessment, interventions, and outcomes for clients.
- Professional development: Can be aimed at enhancing specific practice areas like trauma-informed care, child protection, or working with families.
- Support in challenging cases: Supervisors help social workers navigate difficult cases, ensuring the worker feels supported and has access to guidance when making critical decisions.

3. Managerial, Line Management or Administrative Supervision

Managerial supervision focuses on the operational, administrative, task orientated and performance aspects of a social worker's role. It includes discussing workloads, case allocation, and adherence to organizational policies and standards.

- Workload management: This type of supervision ensures that the social worker is managing their caseload effectively and adhering to deadlines and procedural requirements.
- Quality assurance: Supervisors ensure that the social worker's practice meets professional standards, regulatory requirements, and organizational goals.
- Career development: Although more focused on tasks, managerial supervision often includes feedback about the social worker's progress, training needs, and career aspirations.
- Human Resource management.

The supervision that SWRB SA will be regulating is the Reflective/Clinical Supervision.

This will need to be recorded as part of registration. The supervision will be counted in hours and SWRB SA anticipates that it will amount to no more than ten hours per year. *SWRB SA will come out to the sector for consultation regarding supervision.

Managerial or Administrative Supervision can be provided by people from a variety of backgrounds and does not need to be recorded or monitored by SWRB SA as a part of registration.

Importance of Supervisor Qualifications:

The SWRB SA prefers that professional social work supervision (Reflective/Clinical 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 SA recognises that some senior or specialist practitioners may engage in professional supervision by a supervisor from another discipline or from a state that does not have registration. 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 SA Code of Conduct and Core Competence Standards, along with the Profession's AASW Code of Ethics.

Reflective/Clinical Supervision requires the supervisor to:

- Hold an appropriate level of experience in social work practice.
- In most cases be registered with the SWRB SA. *Please note the **Importance of Supervisor Qualifications** (above)
- Managerial or Administrative Supervision can be provided by people from a variety of backgrounds.

Supervision requirements are not intended to be onerous.

SWRB SA have benchmarked the proposed amounts against other regulated professions. Some supervision may be conducted as Peer Supervision, including case discussions/presentations and for senior managers who are not doing any direct practice in Social Work Services. Supervision may be conducted in person or remotely and some organisations may prefer to contract supervision externally rather than provide it through their own staff.

*If the supervision requirements cause unforeseen challenges for the sector in fulfilling the requirements of supervision whilst we transition to a regulatory model, SWRB SA request that organisations contact the Board to determine if discretionary arrangements could be considered.