

SUNSHINE SUPERVISORY MODEL

1. RATIONALE FOR MODEL DEVELOPMENT

A. Our staff are our only product. We as an agency are only as good as our front-line staff. We cannot expect our staff to treat our residents any better than we treat them.

B. The size of our agency means we have over sixty persons in supervisory positions. Some come to us with little or no supervisory experience, others may have significant experience but their experience may have been in an environment that had a different values base than ours.

C. Supervision in our work environment is difficult as what is best for a staff person sometimes comes into conflict with what is best for the agency or residents.

D. Because of A, B, and C it becomes extremely important that we have a clearly articulated model for supervision. Such a model will help ensure consistency across our agency and enable us to carry out our mission. This can only happen when all supervisory staff clearly understand what we as an agency expect from them.

2. PROCESS OF MODEL DEVELOPMENT

A. **Three different persons provided significant input in the development of this model.** All three espouse values which are either overtly or covertly Christian based, although one does not need to be Christian to relate to these values. Summary comments from each individual are included in the appendix.

- Jean Vanier and his book "Community and Growth." This book examines twenty years of experience with L'Arche communities and styles of leadership that have enhanced and hindered community growth.
- Robert Greenleaf and his booklet "The Servant as Leader" and other selected writings. Greenleaf meshes the roles of servant and leader to develop a concept called **Servant Leadership**. He believes the servant-leader is servant first, and begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve.
- John McGee and his book "Gentle Teaching". This book focuses on the interaction between caregivers and care receivers and presents a psychology of interdependence. We felt it also had significant relevance in the supervisor/supervised relationship.

B. **Leadership Team Discussions.** Over a period of a year Leadership Team spent time reading and discussing the above material both in retreats and in leadership meetings. Out of those discussions, the model evolved.

C. **Use of Pat Schmakiel.** Pat Schmakiel of Pat Schmakiel associates, Inc. Provided consultations and insights in the development and structure of the model. Her November 1993 Newsletter, included in the appendix, summarizes some of her input on Leadership.

3. **THE MODEL**

A. **Background.** Leadership at Sunshine is made up of three major attributes: values, vision and competence. All three are essential attributes of effective supervision. Values are the foundational attributes which provide the context from which each supervisor creates vision and carries out job duties. Values are approved by the Board and are consistent expectations for all supervisors. Vision and competence may vary at different levels of supervision and within different departments. The combination of values, vision and competence allow for the carrying out of mission. The stronger and clearer the understanding of the values, the mission and their relationship, the more freedom exists in vision and competence.

B. **Values.** All supervisory staff will use the following values base as we interact with our supervisor, our peers, and those we supervise. A personal commitment to these values by all supervisory staff is the cornerstone of this model.

- **Unconditional Valuing.** An essential role of each supervisor is to express to each person his or her dignity and worth by entering into a relationship based on dialogue. This value implies:
 - a. Regular one-on-one meetings with all my staff
 - b. The recognition that all my staff have gifts and abilities. If I do not take the time to listen, ask their opinion and then use it in decision making, I am devaluing them and their gifts.
 - c. Valuing others means we share responsibility and creativity with others. If I as a supervisor refuse to share responsibilities I am communicating to my staff that I mistrust them and do not value them.
 - d. That I will not talk in a demeaning manner about my staff or other supervisor's staff.
- **Honesty.** Communication should always be honest and open. My work

should be trusted by those I work with. Honest feedback, both constructive and positive, is essential for the growth of those we supervise.

- **Fidelity.** Faithfulness to and belief in the mission of the agency. If I cannot support the direction or mission of the agency then I recognize that being a supervisor at Sunshine is not possible. Fidelity also implies that I will be consistent in word and action and consistent in my treatment of others. I do not talk behind other people or the agency's "back", but rather address issues or problems with the appropriate person.
 - **Safety & Security.** As supervisors we all play a part in creating a safe working environment for our staff. We do this by:
 - a. Creating a predictable environment with clear expectations so staff know what is expected of them. Termination, when necessary, should not come as a surprise.
 - b. Viewing errors as a learning experience and as opportunity for growth and development. Staff know they can make a mistake and retain their job. This does not mean, however, that repeated mistakes are tolerated.
 - c. Allowing and encouraging ideas to be expressed openly and staff trust that they can disagree and still be listened to.
 - **Tenderness.** Supervisors will work with tenderness if honest but painful feedback needs to be given or if removal from the community is necessary.
 - **Patience.** Allowing staff to participate in decision making requires patience, as it may be quicker to make decisions myself. As a supervisor, I will be patient with staff, encouraging them to ask questions, and giving them the time to learn and develop as employees.
 - **Humility.** As supervisors we will attempt to avoid the natural tendency to grab and hold too much power and we will question and reject values and practices that seek to control and dominate. Acting from a perspective of humility will allow us to solicit and value the input of others.
- C. **Competence.** With a firm value base from which to operate, the second attribute of supervision is competence. Obviously different supervisory positions will carry with them competence unique to their positions. However, there are certain competencies which are universal to good supervision.
- **Ability to handle a crisis.** A good supervisor is not surprised by the unusual and will act properly in response to a crisis.

- **Good judgment.** A good supervisor is not surprised by the unusual and will act properly in response to a crisis.
- **Time management.** A good supervisor follows through on commitments, maintains a healthy balance of time off and work time, and completes tasks in a timely fashion. This supervisor is sensitive to how their tasks and responsibilities affect other's ability to complete their tasks and responds accordingly to reduce frustration.
- **Organizational skills.** A good supervisor has an organizational plan for the area they are responsible for to both keep themselves and those who work for them on track. They can run meetings effectively, working through agendas in an orderly fashion while getting input from all participants.

D. **Vision.** Each supervisor must have a dream for their area of responsibility and be able to communicate it. The mission of people in authority is to keep the community in touch with essentials. That is why they must clearly and frequently announce the vision and see that others announce it.

- **Goals for one's area of supervision.** Each supervisor should have a vision or goal for their department/home/area they are responsible for. The vision/goal should be known and, hopefully, supported by all in the supervisor's community.
- **Goals for individuals.** A supervisor should see the gifts and abilities, the strengths and weaknesses of each individual they supervise. They should create goals that enhance behaviors constructive to the community and work at reducing or eliminating behavior destructive to the community.

E. **Accountability.** We will be accountable and follow-up on this model of supervision in the following ways.

- Provide a comprehensive, 30 hour initial supervisory training program and then provide quarterly inservices on an ongoing basis so that all staff understand our supervisory model. Training will focus on enhancing competence, carrying our values, and developing vision.
- Prospective supervisors will read and respond to the supervisory model during the interview process. Persons not willing to commit to the values will not be hired.
- Utilize a supervisory staff evaluation instrument that evaluates the three attributes of supervision. Annually this tool will be used to evaluate each supervisor by having the supervisor's staff and peers fill out the instrument.

- Every other year do a comprehensive employee attitude survey to ascertain staff attitude toward supervisors.
- Supervisors will create a climate of openness with those they supervise, allowing staff to question decisions, etc. Supervisors will regularly have a method to check and determine if such a climate exists.

4. **CONCLUSION**

Leadership is a difficult vocation which all of us fail at from time to time. If we are open and honest about our weakness and failings we will grow and those around us will grow as well. Leadership is often both a stressful and a lonely vocation. What is best for a staff person sometimes comes in conflict with what is best for a resident or the agency, meaning difficult decisions are necessary. Given this, successful supervisors will find time for the following two disciplines.

A. **Meditation.** Supervisors will take time on a regular basis to step away from the frequent busyness of day to day schedules to reflect on past actions in light of our values and future goals in light of our mission.

B. **Communion.** Supervisors need someone they can talk to openly and frankly about their frustrations, dreams and failures. This can not be a staff they supervise but a trusted confidant that can listen and reflect.