

Michigan Federation for Children and Families

Program Manager / Supervisor Training Needs Assessment

FINDINGS

from

Survey of Federation Member Agencies

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Supervisors have one of the most important roles in a human services organization. Adding to the importance of their work, they tend to be in their positions longer than any other staff. Yet, with the priority on bringing new employees up to beginning competency levels, supervisors are often less likely to receive training even though they are continuously challenged to improve more than any other staff in the organization. In these times of competing demands and the stress of timelines and outcomes, the demands on the role of the supervisor are becoming more complex. With increased risks and more potential for lawsuits and criminal charges, the supervisory role is even more critical than ever before in human services.

Today, supervisors have to be hands-on program managers in an environment where middle management is being reduced or eliminated due to budget cuts and organizational streamlining. In human services, supervisors are often promoted to management ranks or roles because they are often excellent individual performers. Unfortunately, they are usually not provided the training needed to assume a myriad of complex duties and responsibilities and face the unavoidable conflicts that ensue to the role of supervisor and program manager. To address this training challenge, the Michigan Federation for Children and Families has started a new training initiative. The Michigan Federation for Children and Families is a statewide membership organization comprised of private, nonprofit child and family serving agencies (full members); statewide, and regional and local child and family advocacy organizations (affiliate members), involved in protecting children, building families and strengthening communities. The Federation is a key partner with Michigan State University School of

Social Work in the federally-supported child welfare worker recruitment and retention project.

The Federation training initiative will focus on outcomes management, as well as the human dimension of enabling staff to find support and personal meaning in helping vulnerable children and families. Addressing the human dimension of supervision and support in the program is essential to have clarity in self-understanding and well-honed interpersonal skills to encourage and retain the best and most committed staff. To this end, the Federation convened a Staff Training Member Interest Network (MIN).

The Staff Training MIN identified effective, accessible supervisory training as their highest priority for quality improvement and program development. The MIN established a plan for crafting a system of supervisory and management development training and capacity-building for private non-profit agencies. The resulting plan includes five steps. The preliminary step involved determining the most needed competencies for effectiveness in program management and supervision and cost-effective delivery methods. With regard to retention issues, this determination is based on the concept that a sense of competency correlates with job satisfaction and retention. A needs assessment was chosen as the most efficient means for compiling this information.

In Fall 2003, a supervisory training needs assessment survey was administered to supervisors and program managers within member agencies of the Michigan Federation for Children and Families. Completed surveys were returned by 167 supervisors and program managers from 19 agencies throughout Michigan. The analysis of the surveys was conducted by MSU School of Social Work as part of the

School and Federation's recruitment and retention project. The surveys included typical demographic items and questions about current work and work history within human services. Training preferences with respect to training format and schedules also were assessed. Ratings of item importance and self-reported competence levels for 49 items across seven categories of supervisory knowledge, skills, and tasks, formed the majority of the needs assessment. These supervision categories included:

- A. Professionalism
- B. Personnel Administration
- C. Relationship & Communication
- D. Accountability
- E. Diversity
- F. Mission & Change
- G. Self-Care

The summary below highlights a variety of findings regarding sample characteristics, training preferences, group comparisons, perceived importance of supervisory knowledge, skills, and tasks to the positions held, and self-reported competence with respect to the same knowledge, skills, and tasks assessed for importance.

- One hundred sixty seven surveys were returned. One hundred supervisors accounted for 59.9% of the sample. The remaining 67 surveys were collected from program managers and accounted for the remaining 40.1% of the sample.
- Items rated most highly in importance to the position held, as either supervisory or program manager, were related to professionalism and relationship and communication.

- ❑ Even the lowest rated items were considered important by a majority of the respondents with 59.3% describing recruitment and university partnerships as important or very important, and 61.1% indicating the same for exit interviews. For the remaining 47 items two-thirds or more of the sample described the item as important or very important to their position.
- ❑ Professionalism -
- ❑ Personnel Administration
- ❑ Relationship & Communication
- ❑ Accountability
- ❑ Diversity
- ❑ Mission & Change
- ❑ Self-care
- ❑ Age and work history variables showed only limited association with self-reported competence. Age was related to professionalism (.30) and accountability (.20).
- ❑ Additional years in similar position [supervisory or program management] was associated with higher competence ratings with respect to professionalism (.28) and personnel administration (.20).
- ❑ Total years in human services ranged from less than one year to forty years with a mean of 14.3 years. The combined sample total work in human services was 2,236 years. Higher total years was associated with greater self-reported competence in professionalism, personnel administration, and relationship and communication.

- ❑ Several background characteristics were unrelated to competence ratings, specifically, number of years in current position, the number of staff supervised/managed, and – for program managers – the previous years in a supervisory role.
- ❑ Gender differences in self-reported competence were found for only three items, judgment and decision-making, valuing and using difference, and time management. Males reported lower competence ratings for each of these items.
- ❑ No gender differences were found for high importance ratings for any of the items.
- ❑ Differences between supervisors and program managers were identified on four competence items; reporting, cultural competence, setting and maintaining priorities, and balancing work and family. On each of these items program managers described having significantly lower competence.
- ❑ Differences between newer supervisors and program managers (n=51) and longer-term staff (n=53) were found such that newer staff reported lower competence with stress management at twice the rate reported by long-time staff. However, stress management was a concern among one-fifth of the longer-term staff and over two-fifths of individuals more recent staff. The preponderance of short/long-term position differences on rated importance were from the relationship and communication category. Newer personnel were significantly more likely to ascribe high importance to their job for the following items: establishing rapport and credibility, recognition and support of staff,

conflict resolution/confrontation, relationship with other supervisors/managers, collaborative skills, and team development and decision-making.



INTRODUCTION

Why Focus on Supervisory Development?

In most studies of employee retention and turnover, quality of supervision is a determining factor in a staff person's decision to stay or leave an organization. Supervisors have the most important role in a human services organization, and they tend to be in their positions longer than any other staff. And, yet, they are less likely to receive training even though they are continuously challenged to improve more than any other staff in the organization. In these times of competing demands and stress of timelines and outcomes, the demands on the role of the supervisor are becoming more complex by the day. With increased risks and more potential for lawsuits and criminal charges, the supervisory role is even more critical than ever before in human services.

In effect, supervisors have the power to maintain the status quo and make an organization obsolete and/or accelerate change when an organization is trying to be effective and competitive. Today, supervisors have to be hands-on program managers in an environment where middle management is becoming extinct. In human services, supervisors are often promoted because they are excellent individual performers and social workers. Unfortunately, they are usually not provided the training needed to assume a myriad of complex duties and responsibilities and face the unavoidable conflicts that ensue to the role of supervisor. Most available supervisory programs are focused on the needs of public agencies and the specific role of the supervisor in a bureaucratic structure.

Nonprofit supervisors have to understand their multiple roles of representing their agencies' missions, their staff's concerns and meeting the requirements of the contractor simultaneously. They are caught in the middle between having to support unpopular public agency and/or management decisions and loyalty to their staff. Their staff are often inexperienced and overly idealistic, and some may bring personality issues to the job. Caseworker staff turnover is a major problem in the field, which can lead to disappointment and disillusionment for even the most skilled supervisor. It is the supervisor's job, after all, to keep his/her staff productive and happy.

The proposed Federation program will be unique in that it will be infused with the challenges of providing services from a nonprofit provider perspective. The proposed program will focus on outcomes management, as well as the human dimension of enabling staff to find support and personal meaning in this difficult work. Including the “soft” skills in our program may not be popular in today’s fast-paced, results-oriented, competitive world, but it is essential to have well-honed self-understanding and exceptional people skills to encourage and retain our best and most committed staff.

BACKGROUND

Since the summer of 2003, the Michigan Federation for Children and Families' Staff Training Member Interest Network (MIN) has identified effective, accessible supervisory training as their highest priority for quality improvement and program development. The Federation approached a private firm to assist in the development of strategies for implementing and funding a program that will result in a system of supervisory and management development training and capacity building for private nonprofit agencies. Through this process, the following plan was established:

1. Conduct a needs assessment among human service provider agencies to determine the most needed competencies for effectiveness in program management and supervision and cost-effective delivery methods.
2. Join with Michigan State University School of Social Work to develop and promote an advanced training series for program managers and supervisors that would be accessible and affordable for private and public agency program management and supervisory staff.
3. Design and develop a supervisory curriculum for nonprofit agencies that is both outcome and effective people management driven.
4. Develop grants to ensure an affordable, quality effort and product and implement an accessible system of training.

Implement training system for both new and experienced supervisors and program managers.

The proposed needs assessment was distributed in the Fall of September 2003.

METHODS

The survey procedures were designed by the MFCF office and administered by Federation member agencies. The following sections describe the sampling frame and sample characteristics for the targeted population of not for profit agency members, their supervisors and program managers.

Agency sample: Surveys were distributed to agencies throughout Michigan. Survey respondents included only personnel from Federation member agencies. Nineteen of their 39 member agencies (48.7%) had completed surveys returned by either or both supervisors or program managers. The average number of agency respondents was 8.8, ranging from 1 to 46 supervisory or management personnel. Fifteen of the 19 agencies (78.9%) contributed less than 10 surveys, accounting for 59 of the 167 returned surveys (35.3%). The other four agencies accounted for 108 of 167 surveys (64.7%).

Sample of respondents: A total of 167 surveys were returned with 100 submitted by supervisors (59.9%) and 67 contributed by program managers (40.1%). Within the full sample, 71.5% were female (n=118) and 28.5% were male (n=47); two respondents did not report their gender. Respondent ages ranged from 24 years to 66 years, with a sample average of 41.5 years, based on 158 usable responses. Sample ages were normally distributed.

Procedures: Surveys and cover letters were sent to CEOs or Directors of 39 Federation member agencies. Agency administrative personnel handled distribution of surveys. Individual surveys were returned anonymously by postal mail to the Michigan Federation for Children and Families office in Lansing, Michigan. After completed surveys were logged the forms were given to the MSU School of Social Work for data coding and analysis.

Survey Instrument: The survey included eight descriptive variables, position, gender, age, years in position, additional years in previous position, years as a program manager, total years in human services, and number of staff supervised or managed. Respondents were instructed to provide ratings for items within seven categories of

supervisory knowledge and skills. The seven categories contained a total of 47 items and a place for respondents to add other content they believed to be relevant. The seven categories included professionalism, personnel administration, relationships and communication, accountability, diversity, mission and change, and self-care.

For items in each category respondents were asked to do provide two responses, one rating for the importance of the item to supervision and a second rating of their own level of competence. The rating scale for item importance was a four-point Likert-type scale of “Not important”, “Somewhat important”, “Important”, and “Very important”. Self-reported competence was measured using a similar four-point scale of “Needs work”, “Adequate”, “Good”, and “Excellent”.

Category ratings were followed by questions about respondents’ preferences for trainings with respect to scheduled days of the week, frequency throughout a year, length of trainings in days, and format of content delivery. These preferences were solicited about new supervisor/program manager training and advanced training for supervisors and program managers.

Data Analysis: Survey data were summarized using descriptive statistics and tests for scale internal reliability. Inferential tests of differences between groups, based on position and on gender, were used to compare proportions and means. Correlation descriptions of association between individuals’ descriptive information and corresponding ratings of importance and competence also were calculated. Visual summaries, both tabular and graphic, also were created to aid in summary and interpretation of the survey results.

RESULTS

Analyses of survey content, regarding the respondents' individual characteristics, work histories, and training format preferences were made. Summary and comparison of item importance and levels of competence also have been compiled. The following results sections provide descriptive summaries of these analyses.

Respondents reported years in their current positions ranged from less than 1 month (n=7) to as much as 21 years (n=1) with an average of 4.6 years. Program managers (n=59) reported working as such over a range of less than 1 year to as long as 26 years.

Usable values for reported numbers of staff managed or supervised ranged from 1 to over 175 staff with a mean of 9.4. The distribution of staff was severely, positively skewed with the next to highest value being 41 – considerably lower than the high of 175. After removing the outlier of 175, the sample mean dropped to a more representative average of 8.4 staff.

Respondents' years in human services ranged from less than one year to a high of 40 years with an average of 14.3 years. The distribution was normal and based on 156 R's with usable responses. The sample total for years in human services was a combined 2,236 years.

Respondents were asked to indicate which days of the week were best for training. Wednesday was selected most frequently (44.4%) followed by Tuesday (38.6%), Thursday (37.9) and Friday (35.9%). Monday was identified least frequently (27.5%). [see Figure #]. Respondents also were asked to indicate the best format for training new supervisors and program managers. Two to four days worth of training content (45.4%), delivered in one training over 2 to 3 days (34.0%) were the most frequently chosen training structure and schedule. [see Figures # and #] A combination of in-person / web-based, plus peer exchange format was identified by nearly one-third of respondents (32.9%) as the best form for training. [see Figure #] Advanced training preferences were for 2-3 days of training (57.7%) provided either yearly (32.9%) or quarterly (32.2%). Another 25.3% preferred a combination of yearly plus peer exchange. [see Figure #].

The above group demographics, professionals' employment-related information, and training preferences provided individual context and direction for understanding categories of supervisory and managerial knowledge, skills, and tasks. The seven organizing categories included, (1) professionalism, (2) personnel administration, (3) relationship and communication, (4) accountability, (5) diversity, (6) mission and change, and (7) self-care. The next section describes each of these categories with respect to respondents' ratings of the importance to their jobs for specific knowledge, skills, or tasks, and corresponding self-reported levels of competence for each item. As noted above, ratings of importance to job were very important, important, somewhat important, and not important. Self-reported competence ratings were excellent, good, adequate, and needs work.

Initial analysis combined importance ratings of very important with important. The resulting percentages were sorted from highest frequency to lowest. The results indicated that, across the seven major categories, thirty-three of the forty-nine items were rated by 90% or more of respondents as important; ten additional items were rated important by 80% or more respondents; only four items were rated important by fewer than 75% of respondents. The high frequencies for item import were validating in terms of applicability of survey content to supervisory responsibilities. However, the lack of variability across items and categories was limiting. As a result of the initial findings, category analyses were based on ratings of "very important". Corresponding competence ratings were analyzed with a focus on lower levels of competence, namely "adequate" and "needs work". The following category sections summarize, by item, the extent of importance and extent of lower competence for the sample as a whole.

Professionalism

Respondents rated seven items regarding professionalism for overall importance and personal competency. Results for each item in the category are described in the following table.

Category & item content	Very Important		NeedsWork/ Adequate	
	<i>freq</i>	<i>% R's</i>	<i>freq</i>	<i>% R's</i>
<u>Professionalism</u>				
1 Understanding the role of supervisor	143	86.1%	10	6.9%
2 Supervising former peers to importance	52	31.3%	30	20.8%
3 Judgment and decision-making	159	95.8%	2	1.4%
4 Client relations	121	72.9%	8	5.6%
5 Contractor/customer relations	117	70.5%	7	4.9%
6 Public speaking to importance	47	28.3%	43	29.9%
7 Ethics importance	158	95.2%	3	2.1%

Importance to the job for two items was rated very highly: judgment and decision-making (95.8%) and ethics importance to job (95.2%). Corresponding ratings of lower levels of competence were 1.4% and 2.1%, respectively. These two highest importance items had the smallest proportion of lower competence ratings. Understanding the role of supervisor was the next highest importance (86.1%) with corresponding lower competence of 6.9%. The remaining three items were substantially lower in rated importance, public speaking (28.3%) and supervising former peers (31.3%). Corresponding low competence proportions were 29.9% and 20.8% respectively; both equally low on importance to job. Client relations (72.9%) and contractor/customer relations (70.5%) were rated similarly on importance. Corresponding low competence was described by 5.6% and 4.9% of the sample. For each professionalism item, figure 6 shows the proportion of “very important” ratings and matching proportion of lower competence, i.e. “needs work” and “adequate”.

Personnel Administration

Respondents rated ten personnel administration skills and tasks for overall importance and individual competence. Six items were rated as “very important” by over half the R’s. These items were (a) orientation of new staff (72.9%), (b) coaching skills (66.3%), (c) employee evaluation (63.9%), (d) the supervision session (60.2%), (e)

entrance interviews (59.0%), and (f) performance planning (56.0%). Corresponding self-rated lower competence levels were, respectively, orientation (25.0%), coaching (16.7%), evaluations (20.1%), supervision sessions (20.8%), interviews (18.8%) and planning (29.9%). The two items rated as “very important” by the fewest R’s were recruitment and university partnerships (18.1%) and exit interviews (21.7%). A high proportion of the sample self reported low levels of competence; 56.9% and 56.3% respectively. The remaining items are described in the following table.

Category & item content	Needs work /			
	Very important		adequate	
	<i>freq</i>	<i>% R's</i>	<i>freq</i>	<i>% R's</i>
<u>Personnel Administration</u>				
1 Recruitment and university partnerships	30	18.1%	82	56.9%
2 Entrance interview	98	59.0%	27	18.8%
3 Orientation of new staff	121	72.9%	36	25.0%
4 Employee evaluation	106	63.9%	29	20.1%
5 Performance planning	93	56.0%	43	29.9%
6 Coaching skills	110	66.3%	24	16.7%
7 The supervision session	100	60.2%	30	20.8%
8 Corrective action/firing	79	47.6%	69	47.9%
9 Handling grievances	80	48.2%	57	39.6%
10 Exit interviews	36	21.7%	81	56.3%

For each personnel administration item, figure 7 shows the proportion of “very important” ratings and matching proportion of self-reported lower competence, i.e. “needs work” and “adequate”.

Relationship & Communication

Respondents rated eight relationship and communication knowledge, skills, and tasks for overall importance and individual competence. Two items were rated as “very important” by over three quarters of the R’s. These items were (a) establishing rapport and credibility (87.3%) and (b) recognition and support of staff (84.9%). Extent of lower competency ratings was restricted with only 2.8% of the sample reporting lowered

competence with establishing rapport and credibility and just 13.2% describing lower competence in staff support and recognition. The lowest proportion of very important ratings was noted for motivational techniques (57.8%), which had a corresponding lower competency percentage of 31.9%. The remaining five items had proportions of high importance ranging between 61.4% - dealing with difficult personalities – and 69.9% - team development and decision-making. Matching lower competency proportions can be seen in the following table.

Category & item content	Very important		Needs work / adequate	
	<i>Freq</i>	<i>% R's</i>	<i>freq</i>	<i>% R's</i>
<u>Relationship & Communication</u>				
1 Establishing rapport and credibility	145	87.3%	4	2.8%
2 Recognition and support of staff	141	84.9%	19	13.2%
3 Motivational techniques	96	57.8%	46	31.9%
4 Conflict resolution/confrontation	110	66.3%	43	29.7%
5 Dealing with difficult personalities	102	61.4%	48	33.3%
6 Relationship w/other supervisors/manager	105	63.3%	14	9.7%
7 Collaborative skills	109	65.7%	20	13.9%
8 Team development and decision making-too	116	69.9%	30	20.8%

Figure 8 shows, for each relationship and communication item, the proportion of “very important” ratings and matching proportion of self-reported lower competence, i.e. “needs work” and “adequate”.

Accountability

Respondents rated seven accountability related knowledge, skills, and tasks for overall importance and individual competence. One item was rated as “very important” by over two thirds of the R’s, understanding managing to program requirements (70.5%). The lowest rated item was understanding and using data (42.8%). The matching proportions of lower competency were 14.6% and 38.2% respectively. The remaining five items were rated very important across a range of 50.0% - understanding government contractor responsibilities – and 57.2% - reporting. Corresponding levels of lower competence are noted in the following table.

Category & item content	Very important		Needs work / adequate	
	<i>freq</i>	<i>% R's</i>	<i>freq</i>	<i>% R's</i>
<u>Accountability</u>				
1 Understanding/managing to budget	88	53.0%	58	40.3%
2 Understanding/managing to outcomes	94	56.6%	52	36.1%
3 Understanding managing to program require	117	70.5%	21	14.6%
4 Understanding and using data	71	42.8%	55	38.2%
5 Program-related risk management	85	51.2%	56	38.9%
6 Reporting	95	57.2%	25	17.4%
7 Understanding government contractor resp	83	50.0%	58	40.3%

The two largest proportions of lower competence were reported for understanding / managing to the budget and understanding government contractor responsibilities, both with values of 40.3%. Proportions of lower competency relative to high ratings of item importance can be seen in Figure 9.

Diversity

The diversity category contained three items. The importance of each diversity related knowledge or skill was rated high by over half the sample. These items included (a) valuing and using difference (62.7%), (b) cultural competence (61.4%), and (c) gender and leadership (50.0%). Corresponding proportions of lower competence were, respectively, 10.4% for valuing and using difference, 16.7% for cultural competence, and gender and leadership (19.4%). Proportions for each item are noted in the following table.

Category & item content	Very important		Needs work / adequate	
	<i>freq</i>	<i>% R's</i>	<i>freq</i>	<i>% R's</i>
<u>Diversity</u>				
1 cultural competence	102	61.4%	24	16.7%
2 Valuing and using differences	104	62.7%	15	10.4%
3 Gender and leadership	83	50.0%	28	19.4%

None of the diversity items proportionally stand out as being either of high import or greatly in need of training to increase competence. Figure 10 illustrates the proportions of high importance and lower competency for each of these three items.

Mission & Change

Respondents rated six items related to knowledge, skills, and tasks concerning mission and change for overall importance and individual competence. Two items were rated as “very important” by over three quarters of the sample, (a) setting/maintaining priorities (78.3%) and (b) managing multiple projects (77.7%). For these same items the corresponding proportions of lower competence were 18.1% for the first and 20.1% for the next. The smallest proportion of high importance ratings was noted for “assisting staff to grieve losses”, rated very important by 41.6% and having reported lower competence levels by 36.1% of the sample. Proportions for the three remaining items can be found in the following table.

Category & item content	Needs work /			
	Very important		adequate	
	<i>Freq</i>	<i>% R's</i>	<i>freq</i>	<i>% R's</i>
<u>Mission & Change</u>				
1 Connecting to a unifying mission and values	112	67.5%	20	13.9%
2 Setting/maintaining priorities	130	78.3%	26	18.1%
3 Managing multiple projects	129	77.7%	29	20.1%
4 Dealing with barriers to change	90	54.2%	36	25.0%
5 Understanding dynamics	89	53.6%	39	27.1%
6 Assisting staff to grieve losses	69	41.6%	52	36.1%

Figure 11 provides a summary of importance relative to lower competency reports for each of the six mission and change items.

Self-Care

Respondents rated six items related to skills and tasks related to self-care. Overall importance and extent of lower competence within the sample for the proportionately largest item, time management, was 84.3% and 17.4%. Two items were

rated as “very important” by over seventy percent of the sample, (a) stress management (74.1%) – with lower competence proportion of 34.7%, and (b) balancing work and family (71.7%) – having a proportion of lower competence of 29.9%. The item with the least importance rating was peer and other support networks, described as very important by only 56.6% of the sample. Lower levels of competency for such networks was less than one quarter of the sample (22.2%). The following table includes these highest and lowest items as well as proportions for the two remaining items, professional development and setting boundaries.

Category & item content	Needs work /			
	Very important		adequate	
<u>Self-Care</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>% R's</u>	<u>freq</u>	<u>% R's</u>
1 Peer and other support networks	94	56.6%	32	22.2%
2 Time management	140	84.3%	25	17.4%
3 Professional development	110	66.3%	36	25.0%
4 Setting boundaries	110	66.3%	35	24.3%
5 Balancing work and family	119	71.7%	43	29.9%
6 Stress management	123	74.1%	50	34.7%

Graphed comparison of items on proportion receiving ratings of high importance and corresponding lower competence levels can be found in Figure 12.

Supervisory Categories Summary

The above review of supervisory categories reveals the relative importance of the knowledge, skills, and tasks in which supervisors and program managers require competence. The content rated “very important” by over two-thirds (66.7%) of the sample was sorted from highest to lowest; there were sixteen items identified using this criteria.

High Importance - The top sixteen, out of the forty-nine individual items, are illustrative of the variability in importance noted by respondents. The table below contains the sixteen items sorted in descending order of sample proportions for ratings of “very important”. Items appearing most frequently come from the professionalism

category and include the top two “very important” items; judgment and decision-making (95.8%) and ethics (95.2%).

Sixteen highest supervisory categories & item content

Very important

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Item content</u>	<u>freq</u>	<u>% R's</u>
Professionalism	Judgment and decision-making	159	95.8%
Professionalism	Ethics importance to job	158	95.2%
Relationship	Establishing rapport and credibility	145	87.3%
Professionalism	Understanding of the role supervisor	143	86.1%
Relationship	Recognition and support of staff	141	84.9%
Self-care	Time management	140	84.3%
Mission/change	Setting/maintaining priorities	130	78.3%
Mission/change	Managing multiple projects	129	77.7%
Self-care	Stress management	123	74.1%
Professionalism	Client relations importance to job	121	72.9%
Personnel Admin	Orientation of new staff	121	72.9%
Self-care	Balancing work and family	119	71.7%
Professionalism	Contractor/customer relations	117	70.5%
Accountability	Understanding/managing prog requirements	117	70.5%
Relationship	Team development and decision making	116	69.9%
Mission/change	Connecting to a unifying mission and values	112	67.5%

Three additional professionalism items also are among the most important items: understanding the role of supervisor (86.1%); client relations (72.9%); and contractor/customer relations (70.5%).

Three categories – relationship and communication, mission and change, and self care – each contributed three items to the most important supervisory items. Relationship and communication items in descending order were establishing rapport and credibility (87.3%), recognition and support of staff (72.9%), and team development and decision-making (69.9%). The mission and change items appearing among the most important were setting/maintaining priorities (78.3%), managing multiple projects

(77.7%), and connecting to a unifying mission and values (67.5%). Self-care items were identified among the topmost including time management (84.3%), stress management (74.1%), and balancing work and family (71.7%).

Only one personnel administration item was listed with the above content was orientation of new staff, which was described as “very important” by 72.9% of the sample. And, only one accountability item – understanding/managing to program requirements – appeared among the top items (70.5%). The diversity category was not represented among the top sixteen “very important” items. [see figure 13].

Competence – Twelve items, out of the forty-nine individual items, are indicative of the magnitude of lower levels of self-reported competence offered by respondents. The table below contains the twelve items, sorted in descending order of sample proportions for competency ratings of “needs work / adequate”. The most items come from the accountability category with five items appearing: Understanding/ managing to budgets (40.3%); understanding government contractor responsibilities (40.3%); program related risk management (38.9%); understanding and using data (38.2%); understanding/ managing to outcomes (36.1%). The next most commonly appearing category was personnel administration with four items, including the largest three lower competence items: recruitment and university partnerships (56.9%), exit interviews (56.3%); corrective action/firing (47.9%). Also from the personnel administration category was handling grievances (39.6%).

Sixteen highest supervisory categories & item content		Needs Work / Adequate	
<u>Categories</u>	<u>Item content</u>	<u>freq</u>	<u>% R's</u>
Personnel Admin	Recruitment and university partnerships	82	56.9%
Personnel Admin	Exit interviews	81	56.3%
Personnel Admin	Corrective action/firing	69	47.9%
Accountability	Understanding/managing to budget	58	40.3%
Accountability	Understanding gov't contractor responsibility	58	40.3%
Personnel Admin	Handling grievances	57	39.6%
Accountability	Program-related risk management	56	38.9%
Accountability	Understanding and using data	55	38.2%
Accountability	Understanding/managing to outcomes	52	36.1%
Mission and change	Assisting staff to grieve losses	52	36.1%
Self-care	Stress management	50	34.7%
Relationships	Dealing with difficult personalities	48	33.3%

One item each from three other categories were included among the largest lower competency items. Assisting staff to grieve losses – from Mission and Change – was rated by 36.1% of the sample as an item for which they had lower competency. From the Self-care category, stress management appeared among the top twelve low competency content with 34.7% of the sample. Finally, dealing with difficult personalities, an item within the relationship and communication category, was selected by one-third (33.3%) of the sample as a lower competency skill. Two categories were not represented among the most frequent low competence content, the professionalism and diversity categories. [see figure 14]

Analysis of respondent characteristics, ratings of high importance and self-reported competencies for supervision categories and item content

Several subgroups within demographic and individual background variables were compared across the importance and competence ratings for the supervisory content categories. Respondent demographic characteristics, and the above work history variables were used to analyze the seven supervisory category ratings of importance

and competence. Tests of relationship strength were run for age, years in present position, additional years in similar position, i.e. supervisory, total years in human services, and number of staff supervised/managed. Correlations were calculated for age and work history related variables with each of the seven supervision category scores [created by summing all competence ratings on category items]. The following table shows the nature and strength of the correlations. No relationships were found for years in current position, years in supervisory role prior to program manager position, or number of staff supervised/managed. Significant, but weak positive associations were identified between age and professionalism competence ($r=.30$) and age and accountability competence ($r=.20$).

Age & work variables	Dimensions of Supervision							
		Profsnlism	Personnel admin	Relationship & comm	Acctblty	Diversity	Mission & change	Self-care
Age	r	0.30	0.16	0.11	0.20	0.12	0.08	0.02
	p (2-tailed)	0.00	0.05	0.17	0.02	0.16	0.35	0.82
	n	139	150	153	144	146	143	143
Years in position	r	0.11	-0.04	-0.07	0.02	-0.01	-0.13	-0.01
	p (2-tailed)	0.19	0.66	0.35	0.80	0.87	0.12	0.95
	n	143	155	159	149	152	149	149
Addtn'l years in similar position	r	0.28	0.20	0.18	0.19	0.14	0.13	-0.06
	p (2-tailed)	0.00	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.12	0.14	0.54
	n	119	128	132	123	126	124	124
Prog Managers: Prior Years in supervisory role	r	0.01	-0.01	-0.07	0.02	-0.04	-0.14	-0.09
	p (2-tailed)	0.94	0.93	0.59	0.89	0.79	0.32	0.52
	n	48	53	57	54	53	51	53

Total yrs	r	0.44	0.25	0.21	0.13	0.13	0.10	0.01
in human	p (2-tailed)	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.12	0.13	0.24	0.93
services	n	135	147	151	141	145	141	141
Number of	r	0.02	-0.01	-0.10	-0.03	0.02	-0.04	-0.02
staff supervised	p (2-tailed)	0.80	0.86	0.20	0.69	0.82	0.67	0.84
/managed	n	139	150	154	144	148	143	144

r - significant correlations GE .20

The number of years in present position was not associated with competency on any of the seven dimensions of supervision. However, additional years in similar supervisory/program management position was directly related to professionalism competency ($r = .28$) and personnel administration ($r = .20$); those with previous years of supervisory/management experience self-reported higher levels of competency for both categories.

For program managers, length, in years, of supervisory experience prior to their current program management position was not correlated with competency for any of the seven dimensions.

For the full sample, total years of human services employment was directly related to three categories. Specifically, total years in human service was associated with higher competency self-reports for professionalism ($r = .44$), personnel administration ($r = .25$), and relationship & communication ($r = .21$). Finally, for the full sample, the number of staff supervised/managed was not correlated with any of the seven categories of supervision.

Additional correlational analyses were conducted for each of the associations of age, prior years in similar position, and total years in human services and the dimensions reported above. Separate correlations were run to identify, more specifically, the category item(s) contributing to those relationships. [see table below]

Correlations between age and professionalism and accountability category competency items ratings.

<u>Professionalism</u>	r	p	n
1 Understanding the role of supervisor	.28	.001	155
2 Supervising former peers	.27	.001	146
3 Judgment and decision-making	.26	.001	156
4 Client relations	.02	ns	154
5 Contractor/customer relations	.14	ns	153
6 Public speaking to importance	-.02	ns	155
7 Ethics importance	.19	ns	153
<u>Accountability</u>			
1 Understanding/managing to budget	.19	ns	153
2 Understanding/managing to outcomes	.12	ns	153
3 Understanding/managing to program requirements	.08	ns	152
4 Understanding and using data	.15	ns	151
5 Program-related risk management	.09	ns	150
6 Reporting	.00	ns	152
7 Understanding government contractor responsibilities	.25	.001	149

As indicated in the table above, age was related significantly but weakly with competence in understanding the role of supervisor ($r = .28$), supervising former peers ($r = .27$), judgment and decision-making ($r = .26$), and understanding government contractor responsibilities ($r = .25$).

The specific correlations between prior years in similar position and competence in professionalism and personnel administration were limited to three items: understanding the role of supervisor ($r = .30$), judgment and decision-making ($r = .25$), and corrective action/firing (.25). These correlation coefficients are significant but reveal only weak associations between the items and prior years in similar position, as prior years increase self-reported competence also increases.

Correlations between total years in human service and competence on items within professionalism, personnel administration, and relationship & communication dimensions were numerous.

<u>Professionalism</u>	r	p	n
1 Understanding the role of supervisor	.32	.001	154
2 Supervising former peers	.37	.001	143
3 Judgment and decision-making	.26	.001	155
4 Client relations	.10	ns	152
5 Contractor/customer relations	.18	ns	152
6 Public speaking to importance	.13	ns	153
7 Ethics importance	.04	ns	152
<u>Personnel Administration</u>			
1 Recruitment and university partnerships	.10	ns	141
2 Entrance interview	.15	ns	149
3 Orientation of new staff	.09	ns	154
4 Employee evaluation	.10	ns	154
5 Performance planning	.14	ns	154
6 Coaching skills	.26	.001	152
7 The supervision session	.24	ns	148
8 Corrective action/firing	.37	.001	151
9 Handling grievances	.19	ns	142
10 Exit interviews	.06	ns	143

Relationship & Communication

1	Establishing rapport and credibility	.08	ns	154
2	Recognition and support of staff	.03	ns	155
3	Motivational techniques	.07	ns	155
4	Conflict resolution/confrontation	.30	.001	153
5	Dealing with difficult personalities	.27	.001	155
6	Relationship w/other supervisors/manager	.16	ns	155
7	Collaborative skills	.12	ns	154
8	Team development and decision making-too	.04	ns	155

Sub-group comparisons

Three variables were examined for group differences. First, female (n=118) and male (n=47) respondents were compared to determine for which supervisory items there were gender differences. Second, program managers (n=67) and supervisors (n=100) were compared to identify on which items there were differences by position. Third, newer supervisors and program managers, those holding their position for less than two years (n=51), were compared to respondents with five or more years of experience in their positions (n=53).

Gender differences – Statistical comparison of female and male respondents identified only three items with differences in proportions of self-reported lower competency. These differences are listed in the Table below. Female respondents self-reported a significantly higher proportion of good/excellent competence (100%) on judgment and decision-making with respect to professionalism than found for male respondents (95.7%). Despite the significant difference the magnitude of the discrepancy is very small. Female respondents reported significantly less low competency ratings (6.3%) than males reported (17.0%) for the diversity item regarding valuing and using differences. The significant difference in absolute value is small, only 10%, but the relative magnitude is sizable. Males self-reported lower levels of competence nearly three times more than found for females. Lastly, female respondents reported significantly fewer low competency ratings (11.6%) than reported

by male respondents (25.0%) for the self-care item time management. As noted for the previous disproportion, the difference in absolute value is small, only 13.4%, but the difference in relative magnitude is large. Males self-reported lower levels of competence at over twice the rate noted for females. There were no gender differences for perceived high importance of any of the specific supervision items for any of the seven categories.

Differences between program managers and supervisors – Statistical comparison by position identified thirteen specific items with differences in proportions of high importance and lower levels of competence. Four of the items concerned competency ratings. Supervisors reported proportionately greater competence (90.7%) with reporting than was indicated by program managers (75.6%). With regard to lower competency ratings on this item, program managers self-rated lower at two and a half times the proportion observed for supervisors. Related to diversity, fewer supervisors reported lower competency levels for cultural competence (10.4%) than noted by program managers (22.2%), a large difference in relative magnitude. With respect to mission and change, program managers self-rated lower competency with setting and maintaining priorities (25.4%) at a greater proportion than noted for supervisors (10.6%). Program managers were two and half times more likely to describe lower competence on this item and were supervisors. In regard to self-care, program managers disproportionately self-rated lower competency for themselves on balancing work and family (37.1%) than did supervisors (21.3%). Although program managers were only half again as likely to describe low competence, the absolute magnitude of this competence challenge was sizable, with over one-third of program managers reporting lower competence. Likewise, over one-fifth of supervisors reported lower levels of competence in balancing work and family. These findings point clearly at a training need among both supervisors and program managers.

Nine remaining differences were for high importance ratings by position. Six accountability items, two personnel administration items, and one self-care item showed disproportionate ratings of “very important” between program managers and supervisors. The table below describes the relative import assigned to each item by position.

Disproportionate ratings of very important as described by program managers and supervisors.

Disproportionate ratings of “very important”			
	Prog Mngrs	Super- visors	Chi-sq
<u>Personnel Administration</u>			
1 Recruitment and university partnerships	28.6%	12.6%	6.26
5 Performance planning	67.2%	48.5%	5.66
<u>Accountability</u>			
1 Understanding/managing to budget	76.9%	38.4%	23.44
2 Understanding/managing to outcomes	76.6%	45.9%	14.93
3 Understanding managing to program require	83.1%	63.6%	7.25
4 Understanding and using data	57.1%	35.0%	7.71
5 Program-related risk management	63.5%	45.9%	4.75
7 Understanding government contractor responsibilities	63.5%	44.8%	5.33
<u>Self-care</u>			
1 Setting boundaries	58.5%	73.5%	4.01
* All chi-square values are significant at the .05 level			

As indicated, program managers disproportionately rated the personnel administration and accountability items as “very important” above the proportions of such ratings provided by supervisors. However, the high importance of setting boundaries was disproportionately noted by supervisors (73.5%) than reported by program managers (58.5%).

Differences between newer and advanced program managers and supervisors - The training structure proposed by the Michigan Federation for Children and Families included training(s) for new supervisors and new program managers. A different training structure was described for advanced training for supervisors and program managers. Taking into account this proposed distinction; respondents were classified

into one of three groups based on the length of time they had been in their current position. Newer supervisors and program managers – those in their positions for less than two years (n=51) – accounted for 30.9% of the sample. Long-time supervisors and program managers – those in their positions for five or more years (n=53) – accounted for 32.1% of the sample. The remaining respondents had been in their positions for between two and four years, and accounted for the remaining 37.0% of the sample.

Comparisons were made between the newer and long-time subsamples with respect to item ratings of high importance and self-reported levels of lower competence. Only one competence rating, for the self-care item stress management, showed disproportionately lower levels of competence. Newer personnel described lower competence (41.3%) at over twice the frequency as reported by long-time personnel (20.4%). Note, however, that stress management competence is a concern among one-fifth of the long-time supervisors/program managers and among over two-fifths of newer supervisors/program managers.

With regard to item ratings of “very important”, newer and long-time supervisors/program managers were analyzed to identify disproportionate identification of high importance items. Eight items revealed such differences. The professionalism item related to supervising former peers showed a large discrepancy in importance. Newer personnel described this item as very important (48.0%) nearly twice as frequently as did long-time supervisors/ program managers (26.0%). In regard to mission and change, the discrepancy was in a similar direction but with a relatively smaller discrepancy. Newer supervisors/ program managers ascribed high importance to dealing with barriers to change (68.8%) half again as frequently as did long-time personnel (46.2%).

The remaining six items with differences in ratings of high importance all came out of the relationship and communication supervision category. The following table describes the specific proportions for the newer and long-time subgroups. As indicated

Disproportionate ratings of “very important” as described by newer versus long-time program managers and supervisors.

Disproportionate ratings of “very important”			
<u>Relationship & Communication</u>	Newer Personnel	Long-time Personnel	Chi-sq
1 Establishing rapport and credibility	94.1	79.2	4.94
2 Recognition and support of staff	90.2	75.5	3.94
4 Conflict resolution/confrontation	76.5	54.7	5.43
6 Relationship w/other supervisors/manager	74.5	43.4	10.38
7 Collaborative skills	74.5	47.2	8.14
8 Team development and decision making-too	78.4	52.8	7.53
* All chi-square values are significant at the .05 level			

relational issues and communication were rated as being of higher importance to the job by newer personnel than was rated by long-time program managers and supervisors.

SUMMARY

A survey of Federation supervisors and managers was undertaken to inform future training initiatives by the Federation. This assessment addressed agency leaders' perceptions of areas of importance and a self-assessment of competency in relation to their work duties. Based on the assumption that competency in one's work performance and clarity about expectations would increase staff job satisfaction and retention, this survey was intended to inform Federation training and the Recruitment and Retention project in which the Federation is a partner with MSU School of Social Work.

Based on the survey results, a number of categories were identified as very important to supervisors and managers. These categories were primarily professionalism, relationship, self-care, and mission related. The areas in which supervisors noted they need the most work were in categories of personnel administration and accountability. The sub-categories within these broader categories will provide guidance for the Federation and the MSU Project to shape future training and curriculum initiatives.

In addition to the description of highly important areas for consideration and of areas that need further work to achieve a sense of competency, differences between groups who completed the survey were analyzed. This included identifying differences based on role (manager Vs. Supervisor), age, gender, and years in position. In general, more experience correlated with a greater sense of competence. These results will be further discussed to inform future training. The survey also gained information about training structure and length. The discussion between the Federation and the School of Social Work will build on the information from this and future surveys to inform project training initiatives.