

Leveraging Practice Profiles to Strengthen Workforce Development

Great training and curricula on EBPs won't solve it all; there's more to what makes a great employee. Great employees have qualities, mindsets, and skills that set them up for success. Often, we intuitively know these things – as supervisors, we recognize "it" when we see it, but don't often operationalize "it" in written documents.

When things go unsaid, it can lead to unclear expectations, confusion, frustration, and eventually turnover.

We need to be clear about:

- Exact skills, knowledge, behavior, and attitudes staff need to have (e.g., humility, growth mindset, empathy)
- What exactly it looks like to apply those skills/knowledge/attitudes in practice (e.g., how to leverage empathy to meet clients where they're at)
- What it looks like to have mastered key skills/knowledge/behaviors (or for skills to be in development, or at an unacceptable level)

Practice profiles make the implicit explicit, helping supervisors recognize where their staff are, so it's not just a gut feeling.

SAMPLE PRACTICE PROFILE EXCERPT

EMPATHY in communication and problem-solving **OPTIMAL** DEVELOPMENTAL **UNACCEPTABLE** Accepts May recognize Uses blaming current strategies responsibility, tries to language, doesn't meet clients where aren't working but accept they're at, seeks to be unsure of next responsibility understand why steps. May use a "This family is mix of accepting "We've tried a noncompliant." and blaming couple of "I've tried all language different these strategies with strategies to "The family meet with the isn't making this mom, and family, but it's these she just isn't not working for appointments, getting it." them. What have but I just don't other people know what to tried to resolve do about it." similar barriers? How can I improve to meet their needs?"

KEY ELEMENTS OF A PRACTICE PROFILE:

- ✓ <u>Creates a common vocabulary:</u> for discussing jobs and skills & expectations
- ✓ <u>Shows 3 levels:</u> optimal (top of practice, mastered skill); developmental (competency is growing, working on applying skills consistently/independently/in varied contexts); unacceptable
- Specifies: core values that should guide decisionmaking and action (e.g., trauma-informed), core processes/approaches (e.g., assessment-driven care), and core skills (e.g., problem-solving)
- ✓ <u>Is specific:</u> includes real-life scenarios of what you see in practice
- ✓ <u>Different versions exist for all staff levels:</u> frontline staff, supervisors/coaches, executive leaders







BEST PRACTICES

1. Co-create practice profiles with frontline staff and clients

What do staff think makes a good co-worker or supervisor? How do clients want staff to engage with them to help them improve? Co-creation leads to increased buy-in and support.

2. Use it as a tool to start conversations and create a clear but supportive environment, not just as a tool for compliance and accountability

Have conversations with staff about what it will mean to use a practice profile, what they're nervous about, and what they need to feel truly *supported* (not judged or evaluated). Follow through when staff tell you what they need.

3. Roll it out gradually

Start with a skill of the month (or quarter) and introduce the skill in a safe, group setting. Model that supervisors and leaders are open to feedback as well. Continually ask staff for feedback and what else they need to get to "optimal."

4. Don't let it sit on a desk

Integrate the practice profile into the DNA of your hiring, training, and ongoing coaching processes.

HIRING

- Create and tailor job descriptions
- Create behavior or scenario-based interview questions to assess existing skills/attitudes
 Benefits: increases likelihood you hire on the right characteristics and skills, instead of gut feelings

TRAINING (initial and ongoing)

- Develop and updated tailored training content
- Create role plays, scenarios, and case studies to learn and practice new skills

Benefits: sets expectations early on, helps staff build skills in a safe space (role plays), builds confidence/competence, and sets the tone for a learning environment early-on

COACHING, CLINICAL SUPERVISION

- Create an assessment/self-assessment of staff skills
- Set individualized goals with each staff member and prioritize which skills to work on
- Measure growth in skills and give constructive, consistent feedback

Benefits: promotes shared expectations, consistency, accountability & an overall nurturing space for staff to self-reflect, get feedback, and grow their skills

References and further reading: check out this <u>white</u> <u>paper</u> from the National Implementation Research
Network

HOW PRACTICE PROFILES WORK TO DRIVE POSITIVE OUTCOMES:

Provide clarity and consistencey in expectations

Increased worker confidence and competence

Increased use of core skills in practice

practice profile content to:

Use

Improved engagement and job satisfaction

Decreased turnover, positive climate