

# 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

<i>EMPATHY in communication and problem-solving</i>		
OPTIMAL	DEVELOPMENTAL	UNACCEPTABLE
Accepts responsibility, tries to meet clients where they're at, seeks to understand why <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “We've tried a couple of different strategies to meet with the family, but it's not working for them. What have other people tried to resolve similar barriers? How can I improve to meet their needs?”</li> </ul>	May recognize current strategies aren't working but be unsure of next steps. May use a mix of accepting and blaming language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The family isn't making these appointments, but I just don't know what to do about it.”</li> </ul>	Uses blaming language, doesn't accept responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “This family is noncompliant.”</li> <li>• “I've tried all these strategies with this mom, and she just isn't getting it.”</li> </ul>

## KEY ELEMENTS OF A PRACTICE PROFILE:

- ✓ Creates a common vocabulary: for discussing jobs and skills & expectations
- ✓ Shows 3 levels: *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 decision-making and action (e.g., trauma-informed), core processes/approaches (e.g., assessment-driven care), and core skills (e.g., problem-solving)
- ✓ Is specific: includes real-life scenarios of what you see in practice
- ✓ Different versions exist for all staff levels: 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

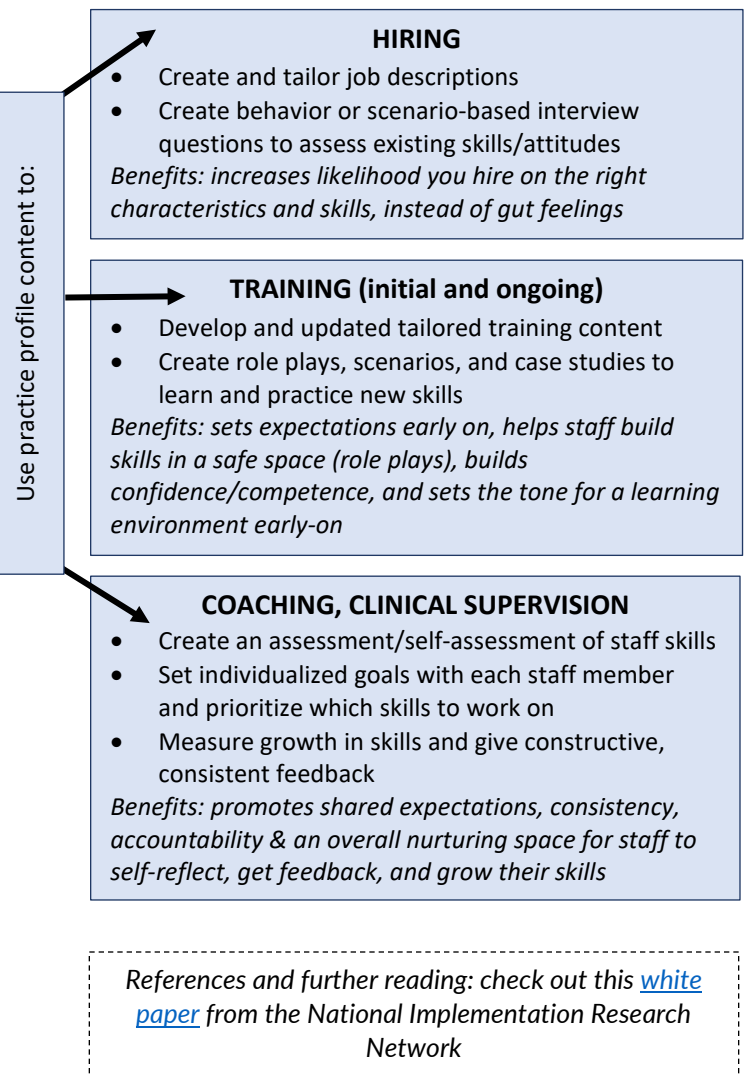
Have conversations with staff about what it will mean to use a practice profile, what they're nervous about, and what they need to feel truly *supported* (not judged or evaluated). Follow through when staff tell you what they need.

### 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.



## HOW PRACTICE PROFILES WORK TO DRIVE POSITIVE OUTCOMES:

