



A Circle of Support for Infants and Toddlers: Reflective Parenting and Strategies in Early Head Start

Introduction

Reflective supervision is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen the professional relationships that support parents, families and young children. Reflective supervision is characterized by active listening and thoughtful questioning by both supervisor and supervisee. It is not therapy, but rather an opportunity for the supervisor to assist and support the supervisee with hunches, questions, and challenges related to the work. Many Early Head Start (EHS) directors, supervisors and staff recognize reflective supervision in practice as an important aspect of overall programmatic support for those who provide direct services to very young children and their families. When EHS directors model and support reflective supervision in their programs, staff are likely to follow suit by participating. When EHS staff feel supported and able to do their jobs, even when those jobs are challenging, they are in the best position to encourage and support parents to reflect on their own parenting practices. In other words, *“How supervisors are with staff influences how staff will be with the families [and parents] they serve”* (Parlakian & Seibel, 2001, p. 3). This is the parallel process in action, or the platinum rule as first stated by Jeree Pawl (1995), *“Do unto others as you would have others do unto others.”*

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- What is the Circle of Support?
- An Example of Reflective Supervision in Practice
- Encouraging and Supporting Reflective Practice in Parents
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