

Defining Reflective Supervision (RS) in the Context of Your Work

“Reflective supervision is the practice of meeting regularly with staff members to discuss their experiences, thoughts, and feelings about their work.”

- Rebecca Parlakian, *Reflective Supervision in Practice: Stories from the Field*, p.1

Reflective supervision (RS) is:

Reflective. RS allows staff to take a step back from the work and examine it differently.

Collaborative. RS is a time for supervisors and supervisees to consider the work together, share ideas, and think about possible next steps.

Regular. RS is a predictable time when staff and supervisors can meet to consider the work.

Relationship-based. RS offers a secure, consistent relationship in which staff can experience the trust, support, and respect they offer the families they serve.

Focused on professional growth. RS supports staff – and supervisors! – in building skills important to their individual work.

Strengths-based. RS helps staff identify their unique strengths and supports staff in applying their skills to the challenges of the work.

Safe. RS provides a secure environment where staff can discuss the real challenges of their work and their own vulnerabilities in a way that supports growth.

Individualized. RS is based in learning about each unique staff member and what is most helpful to them in their work.

Characterized by active listening. Reflective supervisors listen intently to staff, paying attention to spoken language and unspoken cues.

... because in work with expectant families and infants and toddlers and their families, you:

Work at a fast pace.

Might feel isolated.

Never know what to expect.

Develop relationships with children and families that form the basis of your work with them.

Support children and families in building new skills.

Identify and build on the strengths of children and families.

Build an atmosphere of confidentiality, mutual trust, and respect.

Individualize your services to each child and family.

Give children and families your undivided attention, “listening” to what they tell you with their words, their voices, and their body language.

The Early Head Start National Resource Center

