

LSNYC's Expectations for the Supervision Relationship

The Importance of Supervision at LSNYC

Legal Services NYC's mission is to fight poverty and seek racial, social and economic justice for low-income New Yorkers. Our effectiveness rests on the dedication, skills, creativity and compassion of everyone who works here. One of LSNYC's fundamental expectations is that we support each other and work together in pursuit of justice for our clients and the communities we serve.

A cornerstone of LSNYC's support for employees is the supervision relationship. The purpose of supervision is to create a professional partnership that supports growth and high-quality service to our clients and communities through teaching, guidance and direction. LSNYC expects both participants in the supervision relationships – those supervising and those receiving supervision – to invest focus and energy into creating a productive supervision partnership. LSNYC is committed to providing training and support to help employees meet these expectations.

The standards below¹ are intended to be best practices. They should be tailored to the experience and needs of individual employees and their practice areas.

Professional Growth and Development

Our goal is to ensure that LSNYC is a learning community and culture. We want all employees to continue to grow professionally over time and to actively pursue professional growth and development. This expectation is extremely important as it supports us all in doing the best possible work for our clients and communities, reduces burnout, and supports each person in being as fulfilled as possible at work. Supervisors and supervisees should work collaboratively to foster professional development, with, for example, supervisors suggesting or prompting professional development opportunities, and simultaneously supervisees taking the initiative to identify goals for growth and professional development.

All supervisors are expected to make supervision a top priority. Active engagement and the investment of sufficient time are essential.

Learning and skill development is an expectation throughout and at all levels of LSNYC. Though we often think only of union members as those who are supervised, virtually all LSNYC employees have a supervisor whose role includes helping them learn and grow. For example, LSNYC's middle managers are not just supervisors but also have supervision needs of their own. LSNYC and senior managers are expected to guide the development of supervisors, provide opportunities for supervision education, and ensure that supervisors devote sufficient time to supervision.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

LSNYC is committed to becoming a fully diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization in which all employees are treated with fairness and respect. DEI is an overarching concept that informs every section of this document. As a social justice organization, we are committed to fighting for a workplace that is as diverse, equitable, and inclusive as possible for everyone. All employees are expected to learn about, seek

¹ This document incorporates insights from LSNYC supervisors and staff members on effective supervision. A committee composed of staff and management sought feedback from employees in all positions and boroughs and prepared this document to create greater uniformity of expectations of both supervisors and supervisees, foster professional growth and development, cultivate supportive environments, and improve collaboration and relationship-building between supervisors and supervisees.

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to understand, and work to realize LSNYC's DEI goals. Supervisors play a critical role in realizing our DEI vision. Every supervisor is expected to actively engage in learning and becoming increasingly skilled in supervision that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion. Supervisees are similarly expected to actively engage in developing their DEI skills. We all bring our life experiences into the workplace, which include the unconscious bias we have learned since childhood and all of the privilege and oppression that our society imposes. Participants in the supervision relationship should be mindful of and work to mitigate the ways that power dynamics and implicit bias, including supervisor/supervisee, job title, race, gender, and other factors may affect their relationship with their supervisee or supervisor.

Fairness and Individually-Tailored Supervision

Supervisors should strive to provide support and feedback that addresses similar situations without bias or favoritism. It is important that supervision is responsive to the supervisee's level of development, skill set, and learning style. People at different levels of development and skill may require different types and amounts of supervision, and may have learning styles that call for modification of the supervisory approach.

Constructive, Clear, and Timely Feedback

Supervisory feedback is a powerful tool for fostering professional growth and skill development. It is a core element of supervision. Everyone needs timely, constructive, and supportive feedback about what they are doing well and where they can or need to improve. Effective supervisory feedback includes conveying appreciation (acknowledgement and positive feedback), evaluation (this is how you did), and coaching (this is how you can grow or do better). Supervisees should focus on using the feedback provided (including feedback that is difficult to hear) to learn and grow. Supervisees and supervisors should work together to create and adhere to internal deadlines to facilitate timely feedback on written work. Feedback about areas where improvement is needed should be part of regular, ongoing supervisor/supervisee conversations, and should not be raised for the first time in annual evaluations.

In addition, supervisors should seek feedback about their supervision strengths and challenges from their supervisees, use this feedback to grow and develop, and strive to build a professional relationship in which such feedback can and will be provided.

One of the foundations of constructive feedback is clear and effective communication. Both supervisors and supervisees are expected to communicate respectfully at all times, just as everyone at LSNYC is expected to engage in respectful communication with all colleagues.

Regular Meetings

Regular meetings are essential to cultivating a constructive supervision relationship. Supervisors and supervisees are expected to set and prioritize regularly scheduled meetings to discuss the supervisee's work and their professional growth and development. Both supervisors and supervisees are expected to prepare for the meetings. Supervisees are also welcome and encouraged to seek drop-in advice from their supervisors when needed, though this should not take the place of regularly scheduled meetings.

Single Primary Supervisor

Every employee should have one identified primary supervisor who, if an employee has more than one supervisor, is responsible for prioritizing competing demands and ensuring that the guidelines addressed in this document are being followed.